LABOUR
40p FORTNIGHTLY
BRIEFING
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INSIDE:

☆ Brighton Conference: the inside story
☆ Stalinism in crisis: oppositionists speak out
☆ Interview: Moses Mayekiso
☆ NUJ Disputes
☆ Fight the Sinn Fein ban!
☆ Zero Growth explained
☆ The END Convention
☆ Greg Basset's Brighton

40p

KINNOCK'S REVIEW WILL APE THE TORIES'

MARKET MAYHEM!

Following the collapse of the pound and the increasingly imminent threat of economic recession, Thatcher's Tories face their biggest policy crisis since 1979.

Higher inflation, higher unemployment, a squeeze on profits, and cutbacks in industrial capacity are now a certainty in the near future.

Thanks to the Bundesbank, Lawson's "soft landing" (already wildly off target) has turned into a belly flop.

On October 5th, the West German central bank — aiming to head off inflation and strengthen the Deutschmark againt the buoyant dollar — raised its discount rate a full point to 6%, its highest level in seven years.

A jittery pound, already weakened by the £2 billion August trade deficit, began free falling towards the crucial DM3 indicator, threatening Lawson's anti-inflation strategy by pushing up import prices.

In a matter of days the Bank of England spent $2 billion in foreign currency reserves to shore up the pound. In desperation, Lawson raised the base rate to 15% — its highest level since the 79-81 recesssion and the eleventh rise in just over one year.

The idea was to halt the slide in the pound by maintaining its attractiveness (through high interest rates) to "footloose" international capital, which has been financing Britain's huge balance of payments deficit for some time.

Lawson's strategy was to try to halt its flight in the wake of the Bundesbank decision and thus stave off a further collapse in the pound — all to no avail.

On Monday, October 9th, the pound crashed below the DM3 level taking the Stock Market (and any Tory hopes of a quiet Conference) with it.

Lawson's "single note" economic policy (using interest rates to control consumption, restrain inflation, and narrow the trade gap) now faces failure on all fronts.

Consumer spending and credit, bank and building society lending, and borrowing by private industry are all at near record levels. Inflation, which had dropped slightly to 7.3% in August, will soon start to rise again, making a nonsense of Treasury predictions.

This combination of mounting inflationary pressures and an ever-widening trade gap has exposed the underlying structural weakness of British capitalism — of which the collapse of the pound is the most striking symptom.

At 3.2% of GDP, the British current account deficit is proportionally greater than that of the US, which has its own trade gap crisis. A high net outflow of long-term investment capital (especially to the US) exacerbates the problem.

By Dave Palmer
Labour Briefing Editorial Board

Fundamentally, the trade gap is the result of short-term "excessive" growth in consumer spending combined with long-term decline in British manufacturing.

It is nothing new. The only difference is that under Thatcher the exchange rate has been left to float (hence the interest rate strategy) and we have had larger deficits, more modest growth, and higher unemployment.

Lawson and Thatcher (influenced by her obssessive monetarist advisor, Alan Walters) may disagree about joining the EMS and intervention in the money markets, but they agree on maintaining a high "anti-inflationary" pound.

But, as the *Financial Times* pointed out, "no country feels it can import inflation. The paradox is that not all countries can have a strong currency at the same time."

Caught in the double-bind, the Tories have been unable to stave off the fall in the over-valued and uncompetitive pound and have only succeeded in giving a further twist to the dreaded inflationary spiral.

Labour has rightly made play of the collapse of Lawson's "ecomomic miracle". But as an alternative Kinnock proposes only credit controls and increased investment in training and infrastructure.



PHOTO: Don Williams

Thatcher: holding out her hand to catch the falling pound?

Credit controls might have some effect, but deregulated financial markets, whose activities the Labour front bench are notoriously reluctant to curb, will find them easy to evade.

As for the relatively small (and mostly unspecified) increases in public investment envisaged in the Policy Review, they would have little chance of curing Britain's basic economic ills and putting it on an "equal foting" (in capitalist terms) with Germany or Japan.

If Labour were elected tomorrow John Smith would probably follow the same course as Lawson. And as Labour remains silent on taxes, wage restraint (incomes policy) is due for a revival among both bourgeois pundits and right-wing Labour economic gurus. It may well rear its ugly head at next year's Party Conference.

In the meantime, higher mortages rates and rising import costs will force workers to take action to defend real wage levels. The Tories hope the squeeze on profits will encourage companies to stand firm against the unions. In the public sector, the government itself will undoubtedly take an even tougher line.

As in the 70s, the economy will stagnate and wage claims will be blamed for higher production costs and rising inflation.

The run-up to the General Election is now certain to be a period of low growth, falling investment, rising unemployment, and wage militancy. Tragically, Labour leaves Brighton bereft of any policies to deal with this scenario — and vulnerable to Tory and media hysteria on trade unions and wage demands.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Letters

Voices for Rushdie

Vaz repudiated

By LESTOR YOUNG

A triumphant Black Sections fringe meeting on the evening following their defeat of the NEC's "grey sections" ploy was nearly spoiled by a grotesque intervention from Keith Vaz MP.

Abusing the platform provided by Black Sections, Vaz waved the leaflet advertising the "Voices for Rushdie" fringe meeting, said it was appalling that any Black Sections supporters should be involved with it (Narendra Makanji was listed as a speaker), called Rushdie a "black traitor", and even compared "Voices for Rushdie" with Enoch Powell!

The following lunchtime, over 70 people packed and overflowed the small meeting room booked for the "Voices for Rushdie" fringe.

Chairing the meeting, Mike Marqusee of the *Briefing* Editorial Board observed that none of the critical issues raised by the Rushdie affair had been allowed on to the Conference agenda but that a commitment to funding new religious schools had found its way into the Policy Review, courtesy of Roy Hattersley.

Narendra Makanji detailed the Black Sections position supporting the right of dissent within the Black community.

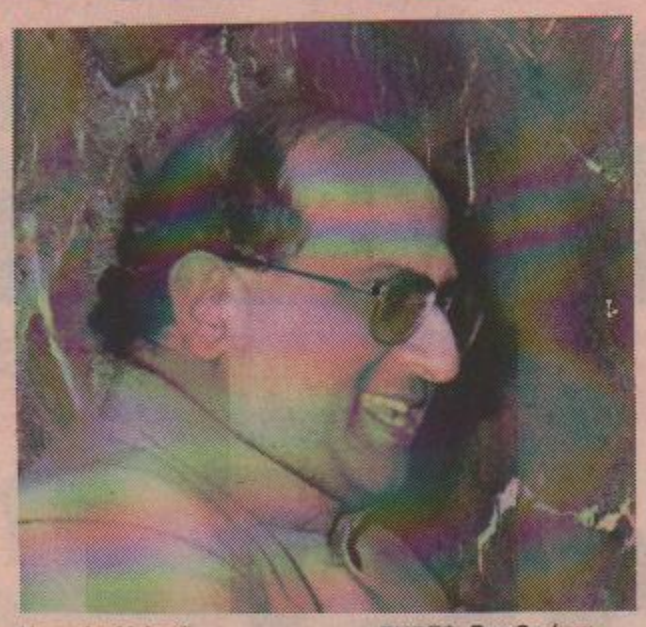
Gita Sahgal of Southall Black Sisters outlined the need for a genuinely pluralist and secular society and Maryam of CARI, referring to the Iranian experience, made it clear that fundamentalism is an anti-working class, anti-women *political* force and has to be opposed as such.

Numerous and varied contributions were made from the floor, demonstrating once again that this topic desperately needs to be talked through on the left at some length.

Vaz himself was in the audience and was called on to speak. He said the campaign against Rushdie was a positive contribution to the development of a civil rights movement in Britain and accused the left of siding with Kinnock on this issue.

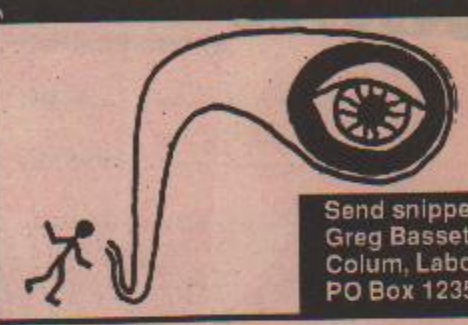
This was a bit rich, given Vaz's own support for Kinnock against Benn last year and his willingness to nominate Roy Hattersley for Deputy Leader this year, not to mention the fact that Kinnock's stated position on the Rushdie affair is "the less said about it the better" and Hattersley wants Penguin not to publish the paperback.

Vaz also challenged "Voices for Rushdie" to come to Leicester — a challenge the meeting's organisers were delighted to accept.



Narendra Makanji *PHOTO: Roy Cuckow*

PERISCOPE



Send snippets and info to: Greg Bassett, Periscope Colum, Labour Briefing, PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.

Two faces of Jack Cunningham

At Conference Cunningham promised "tough environmental regulation" with effective enforcement of standards based on "the principle that the polluter pays", assuring us that under Labour there would be "none of the political posturing" of the Tory Conference on green issues.

The next day in the national press it emerged that this same Jack Cunningham is the paid parliamentary adviser to Albright & Wilson, a chemical company who (according to Friends of the Earth) have dumped 11 million gallons of poisonous effluent into the sea off Whitehaven in Cunningham's own constituency.

As we said three years ago: Sack Jack!

Extracts from Labour Briefing's "Conference Delegates' Briefing"; a daily bulletin prepared overnight and handed out to delegates each morning of Conference. The bulletin featured an easy-to-follow voting guide with short summaries of the day's Conference business, as well as reports of the previous day's proceedings and events on the fringe.

Billion dollar brain damage

Experts put the cost of saving the Amazon rainforest at some $1.5 billion. Labour's new post-Policy Review plans for Trident will cost $1.5 billion. Now we know what Kinnock meant when he said in his Brighton speech that we have to set "priorities".

That old Mandelson Magic

Sources at Walworth Road tell us the Party has been flooded with resolutions and letters demanding the NEC call a national demonstration against the Poll Tax on November 5th.

In his wisdom as unelected head of the Party, Peter Mandelson has decided against this.

Presumably the sight of thousands of Labour Party supporters thronging the streets of London protesting against the government doesn't fit in with the Party's new image.

Mass public protest might even lead to the election of a Labour government and already, our leaders admit in private, this will be a disaster.

If you don't live in Hartlepool or Stoke on Trent South you've missed out on your chance to have Cde Mandelson as your next MP.

We hear the Regional Organisers for these areas are consulting Peter's diary to arrange the selection meetings at his convenience. We'd have thought someone of his omnipresence could easily represent both constituencies.

Beyond the Fringe

Bizarre Scene: Top journos Stuart Weir and John Lloyd handing out leaflets advertising a fringe meeting featuring a debate between — Stuart Weir and John Lloyd. This head-to-head proved to be the week's least interesting event.

Economy: Cat's out of the Bag!

"The election of a Labour government which will probably be combined with a substantial balance of trade deficit, is likely to place heavy pressure on sterling. A successful industrial policy would eventually help by a growth of exports and reduction of imports. But in the interim some reduction of the value of sterling will probably be required.

"There is a danger that the reductions in living standards and rising inflation consequent upon a declining exchange rate will threaten the Labour government's programme at the start."

Henry Neuberger, Economic advisor to Brian Gould.

Henry's admission certainly puts paid to the Policy Review, which has no measures to deal with the situation he describes.

Vauxhall PS

When NEC members grilled Martha Osamor before crossing her off the Vauxhall by-election shortlist she was attacked for not following official Labour policy on Ireland (she wants the troops out).

In Brighton, Kate Hoey, beneficiary of the NEC's racist largesse, spoke at a public meeting of the Campaign for Labour Representation in Northern Ireland — a body whose sole policy has been repeatedly rejected by Labour.

We look forward to appropriate action by our "colour blind" NEC.

Labour Careerists Committee

The hypocrisy of the LCC call for *quotas for women* was exposed at Conference by their failure to support Alice Mahon, Diane Abbot, or Audrey Wise for the NEC.

Kinnock's hit-squad preferred smart-suited men, including outrageous sexist John Prescott.

Only one woman for seven places: a quota of 14%! Or is their support for quotas a qualified support: support for a quota of women with their politics?

PR in Brighton What *will* they say next?

Regular readers will know that *Briefing* supporters are pretty evenly divided over Proportional Representation.

At Conference we printed two views in our daily bulletin (one pro, one con).

Whatever the merits of their arguments, both *Briefing* contributions carried more conviction than the hypocritical cant emanating from right wing champions and opponents of PR in the media-hyped Conference debate.

Speaking for the NEC, Roy Hattersley argued against PR because "we'd have to bargain away our manifesto to gain the support of small parties..."

Roy's transformation into the guardian of manifesto commitments was matched on the other side by Gavin Laird, denouncing alleged attempts to "stifle" the PR debate and demanding, "How can this Party join with the Tories in defending the status quo?"

Well, Gavin, if you can't answer that one, who can?

Finally Jeff Rooker claimed that PR would help break "white male domination" of the House of Commons.

In keeping with this sentiment, we expect Jeff to make way in Birmingham Perry Barr for a black and/or female replacement.

Innumerate and Irradiate

According to Gerald Kaufman, Labour is committed to a "Nuclear Free World" by the year 2000. Yet in the energy debate at Conference Kinnock's atomic puppets refused to support phasing out all nuclear reactors within 15 years. So the earliest possible date for phasing out nuclear power is well into the 21st century.

Some problems with the calculator, Gerald? No wonder our economic policy doesn't add up.

Membership Sham

Labour's press office announced at Conference that 42,000 "new members" had joined since January, making the new membership campaign "a major achievement".

However, buried in the NEC Report was the fact that total membership *dropped* last year by 22,884 (7.7% decrease).

A secret NEC study made of two Southampton CLPs showed that while 400 new members had joined in the course of a membership drive, 400 old members had left.

Fed up with New Realism, Kinnockism, Post-Fordism, and Why-botherism?
Wanna talk about it?
Make a date now for the...

Labour Briefing Annual General Meeting 1989

Saturday, October 28th

11am-5pm (Registration at 10:30)
Durham Road Community Centre, (near Finsbury Park, London)

•Opening Debate: Priorities and prospects for the Left
Panel discussion with Ken Livingstone MP, Cllr. Martha Osamor, Tessa Van Gelderen (NUR), and Graham Bash. Contributions from the floor will be welcome.

•Workshops on Labour Party, Local Government, Green Politics, Democratic Rights, Trade Unions.

•Internationalism, 1989.
Session with speakers from struggles around the world, chaired by Jeremy Corbyn.

•*Labour Briefing* in the coming year.
Proposals and debates on the fortnightly paper, local Briefing Groups, political positions, etc.
Plus: elections to new National Steering Committee.

•Finale: Rally for Socialism with Reg Race and Mandy Mudd.

○ Creche ○ food ○ stalls ○

***Briefing* Raffle Prize Draw! The draw will now take place at the October AGM.**
Tickets still available from the *Briefing* office.
Top prizes! Good cause!
For more information phone the Briefing office (01-809 3927)
or write to PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.
All *Briefing* readers welcome!

Editorial

BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

The Labour government-in-waiting — and the left opposition

This year's Labour Conference embraced nuclear weapons, nuclear power, anti-trade union laws, and market forces. At the same time it dumped Ken Livingstone off the NEC and (worst of all) began the process of severing the Party's historic links with the trade unions.

The whole shebang was aimed more at pleasing the Tory media and reassuring the ruling class than expressing the aspirations and meeting the needs of Labour's supporters on the ground.

Worse is promised for next year.

In the CLPs, there has been an undeniable swing to the right in which the LCC apparatchiks have played a significant role. Through their bogus themes of "Party democracy" and "modernisation" they have cynically exploited the demoralisation generated by three straight Thatcher victories.

However, their success would have been unthinkable without the trade union block vote, which in Brighton was wielded ruthlessly on behalf of the leadership. Kinnock's claim that Conference "spontaneously" endorsed his reactionary leadership is a calculated lie. Nuclear weapons and anti-trade union laws have become Party policy courtesy of a right wing block made up of the GMB, AEU, EETPU, NUPE, and USDAW. Against this the vacillating "leftism" of the TGWU and MSF was of no consequence.

Edmonds finished Conference with a frighteningly dishonest plea for an end to the block vote (which he had used without compunction all week to squash democratic debate).

But Bill Jordan let the cat out of the bag: the block vote has to be kept for the time being as a guarantee of "stability". "I won't give it up," he said on TV, then corrected himself, "*my union* won't give it up until we're satisfied the long-term future of the Party is safe."

What all this means is that the block vote — and the links with the trade union that are so vital both to Labour's bedrock identity and its capacity to become an instrument of socialist advance — will be retained in its present, undemocratic form until the Party's leaders are convinced that the left has been *permanently* locked out. That can only happen through the structural termination of any real membership rights and powers in the CLPs or the unions.

The aim of the leadership is to turn Labour into something like the US Democratic Party: a vehicle for professional politicians, with no formal links to the organised working class, a passive, atomised membership shielded from radical influences, and a "socialism" from which the establishment has nothing to fear.

Again and again at Brighton front benchers were at pains to dampen down working class expectations of the next Labour government. On health, public services, jobs, wages, democratic rights, disarmament, the message was clear: vote for us and nothing much will change!

The character of the Labour government in waiting took on a grisly clarity during the week. It will be anti-union, authoritarian, subservient to the US, and reactionary on social issues.

In this context, the commitment to retain Tory union laws takes on a new and sinister light.

The leadership was frightened by the "summer of discontent" (which helped buoy them in the polls). They know the election of a Labour government could well result in an industrial and social explosion as workers take action to recoup ground lost since 1979. They therefore want to keep Tory anti-union law not simply to placate "public opinion" (which is largely favourable to trade unionism) but because they have every intention of using it. Let's just hope they don't view Trident the same way.

For this reason (as well as others) a socialist presence in the Labour Party is vital. While it is understandable that people should react to the dismal proceedings in Brighton by abandoning membership of or active participation in the Labour Party this would be a tragic mistake — for the left and for the whole working class.

In the run up to the General Election we have to work hard to maintain pressure on the leadership within the Party and to use that pressure to expose — to Party members, trade unionists, and the wider public — the real nature of Labour's programme and the real intentions of its leadership.

Only by doing this will we be in any position to strike back after a Labour victory — which in itself will depend on our efforts. Despite Labour's welcome opinion poll progress, the road to the General Election will be a rough one, with plenty of policy pot-holes (notably economic) over which Kinnock and his team could stumble badly.

But simply enjoining socialists to "stay in and fight" will not be enough. Nor will Ken Livingstone's embarrassing attempt to worm his way back into favour with god-knows-whom by calling on us to "unite" behind current policies and leadership.

Instead, it's worth looking closely at two relative successes for the left at Conference: the struggles led by Black Sections and the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

Both these campaigns are based in powerful social movements with supporters far beyond the confines of the Labour Party. They have made themselves into effective conduits for these social movements into the Labour Party through years of positive, non- sectarian campaigning. Both have maintained basic principles while working in the broadest possible alliances. Both have taken their arguments — often in hostile circumstances — to the base of the Party and the trade unions.

They have expanded their agendas and responded creatively to popular concerns (Section 28, apartheid, the police). They have adopted militant *public* tactics. They have lobbied union leaders and MPs but have been prepared when necessary to confront the leadership rather than "negotiate" with it in secret.

Of course, the left as a whole cannot simply reproduce the tactics employed by these single-constituency pressure groups. Building alliances around a comprehensive socialist programme with tactics and leadership to match will be much more difficult.

Nonetheless we should bear in mind what Tony Benn said at the end of Conference: "The left's base is too narrow. We need to win the arguments for socialism amongst a broad layer of people outside as well as inside the Party. There is no mechanistic solution to a political problem."

Behind the headlines

Brighton: a delegate's-eye view

I came to Conference expecting a democratic forum in which we as delegates would all have our say, debate Party policy, and represent our members.

"More fool you," you may think.

By Liz Davies
Conference Delegate,
Islington North CLP

Well, I came away with the feeling that I had been a prop in a television spectacular and the certainty that there had been no democracy and no debate.

This was clear from the first vote, when Conference decided not to allow amendments to the Policy Review. From then on, our debates were meaningless. Whatever policy was passed, the leadership could safely ignore it.

During the debate on amending the Review, not one delegate rose to speak against the right to amend. The impression was that Conference was in favour — until the vote was taken.

The leadership were so confident of the union block vote that they didn't even try to convince the CLPs.

It therefore seemed very odd later in the week when the leadership supported calls to abolish the block vote; throughout the week it was used to uphold the leadership against the CLPs.

A journalist praised us at the end of Conference for "talking to those out there not just yourselves in here." Clearly, it was an impressive TV occasion.

I'm all in favour of professionally-staged TV occasions like election rallies. But I object when Conference becomes an election rally for the benefit of the cameras and we lose our only chance to participate in debate or express dissent.

The left did win votes on defence spending, Black Sections, and lesbian and gay rights. However, these were all the result of "own goals" by the leadership and each vote merely restored the previous status quo.

Nonetheless, in Brighton any victory for the left was heart-warming.

There was a great deal of discontent amongst CLP delegates. Most of the ones I spoke to disagreed with the leadership on nearly every issue.

The left still holds sway in the CLP section to some extent. But there is a profound problem that the left must tackle. Many delegates were prepared to vote against the leadership on political issues (not, however, enough to counter the block vote) but they are not prepared to stand up against the leadership itself — hence the NEC results and Neil's standing ovation.

The CLPs have been sold the line that only *this* leadership can win the next election. And all of us are desperate to win the next election.

As a result, most left-minded delegates are prepared to go along with Kinnock, at least until the next election.

They will also play their assigned part in front of the TV cameras, if they think that will help Labour win.

Until the left tackles this feeling of desperation, we will get nowhere. We too have to be seen as serious about winning the next General Election

Most people on the left doubt this can be done with the politics of the Policy Review. But until we convince others that *our* policies can win, we will get nowhere.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

The four black Labour MPs at last year's Conference: although the NEC was voted down at this year's Conference, a real victory for Black Sections has not yet been won.

Socialist Movement

Diary of activities and events

Oct 19.
Day of Action on Irish Media Ban, sponsored By SM, etc.
Oct 21.
Regional Reps meeting, ring Colin Lindsay, 0203-714070.
Nov 11/12.
Socialist Movement National Trade Union Conference.
Ring Will McMahon, 01-281 6225.
Nov 18.
Welsh Socialist Conference, ring Janet, 0443-224378.
Nov 25.
Socialist Movement Organising Committee, Birmingham
Mar 17/18, 1990.
National Green/Socialist Movement Conference, London.

Other Initiatives:

Lesbian and Gay Working Group: is aiming to produce a Lesbian and Gay agenda to develop and broaden the work of the group and to enable it to take its work and policies into the wider Socialist Movement and beyond. If you want to get involved ring Rebecca Flemming, 01-354 1402.

Students: We are beginning to organise a series of public meetings at universities and colleges and a fringe at the NUS Conference. Ring Geoff Ellingham, 01-250 0955.

Media Strategy: We are developing a Media Strategy team to give us a national profile in the media. Ring Alan Slingsby, 01-274 9182.

SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

Labour Party members' meeting

11.30-5.00pm
Saturday October 14th
Key Books, 136 Digbeth
Birmingham

In the aftermath of the Labour Conference the Socialist Movement will be holding a meeting in Birmingham for its supporters in the Labour Party. The meeting will provide Socialist Movement supporters with an opportunity to discuss how we can fight the rightward drift of Labour's New Realist leadership. The Socialist Movement, with its Socialist Policy Review, is ideally placed — providing a positive alternative rather than just negative opposition.

If we are to re-establish the Labour left's influence it is important that we do not simply confine ourselves to the Party structures. We must adopt the Socialist Movement's twin-track approach of continuing the battle within the Party whilst linking up with those fighting outside.

Please ensure you do your utmost to attend this important meeting.

SPONSORS:
Tony Benn MP; Jeremy Corbyn MP;
Alice Mahon MP; Les Huckfield;
Eric Heffer MP; Dawn Primarolo MP;
Lol Duffy; Mandy Moore.

For further details contact Davy Jones, 13 Moreland Mews, London N1 1HN, tel. 01-607 9579.

Student Tour

The Socialist Movement is organising among students, with a speaking tour of colleges and a fringe meeting at NUS Conference.

Tony Benn, Alice Mahon, Eric Heffer and Jeremy Corbyn have all agreed to participate and they will be joined by speakers from the Green movement, Women for Socialism and other campaigns.

This will not only help the Socialist Movement build and widen its base. It will also help students organise a fightback on student loans and the overall attacks on higher education.

Labour Briefing is brought to you in great haste in this post-Conference week: regular features back next time! Write to us at PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.
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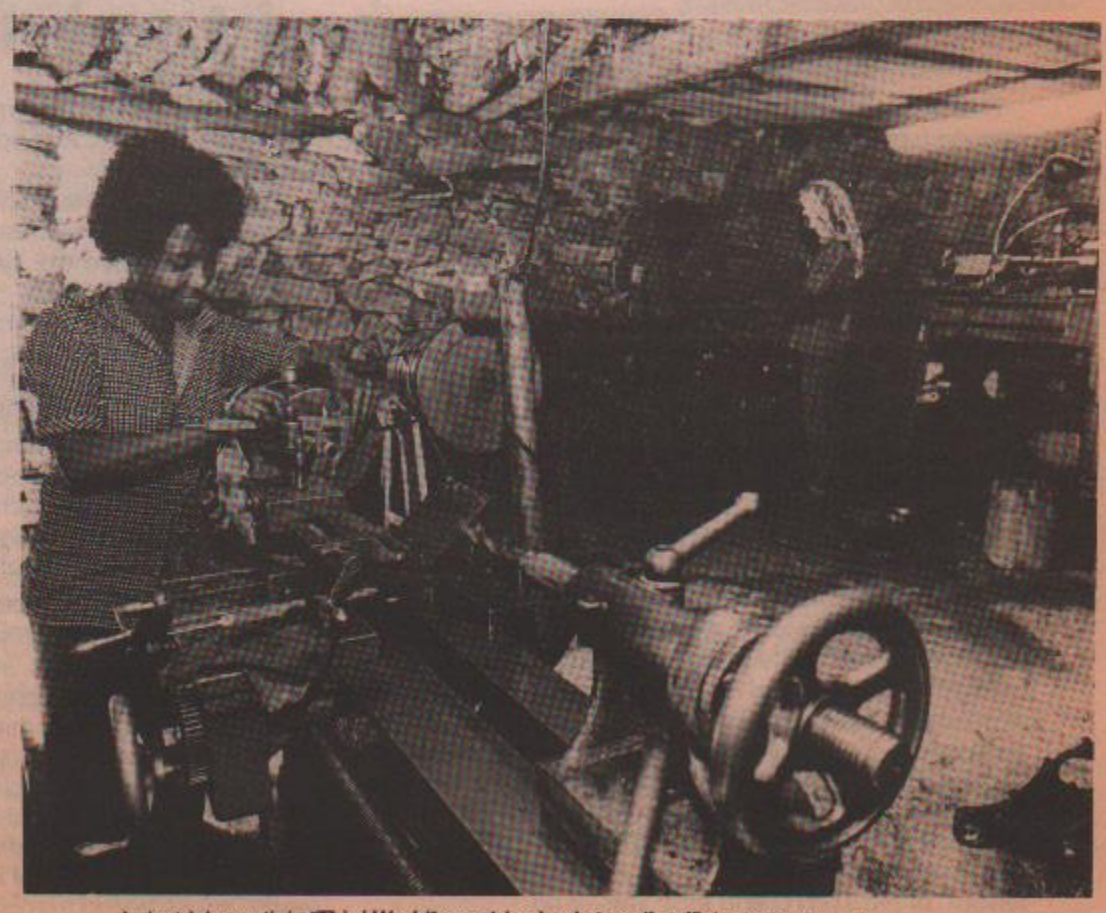
Economic Notebook

Green Economics

Is Zero Growth the answer?

Contrary to popular myth, ecological balance does not require "zero growth".

But it does require ecological constraint so that ecomonic activity does not go beyond the limits the biosphere can sustain.



Industrial growth in "Third World" countries leads to self-sufficiency for workers.

By SERA

The arguments against the growth of Gross National Product is an uhelpful diversion. GNP is a measure of monetary activity; not of environmental degradation.

The two are not directly correlated: GNP can go up with less degradation and down with more, according to what sort of goods and services the economy is producing and how.

. Some products (e.g., tropical hardwood furniture, cars, pesticides) do cause a great deal of damage to the environment, using up scarce resources and causing pollution.

But others (natural fibre clothes, microchips, live entertainment) have little environmental impact. They rely primarily on human energy, or use resources that are not scarce or cause little pollution. Many services come into this category.

Some industries, such as organic farming, pollution treatment, energy conservation and materials recycling may positvely improve the environment. As a monetary aggregate, GNP can't distinguish between them.

Therefore no rate of economic growth on its own, whether positive, zero, or negative, is useful as an environmental policy objective, or as an indicator of ecological impact.

The goal is "sustainability". If an economy is sustainable, it is able to guarantee future generations the same level of environmental benefit as present ones.

After all, a key feature of the ecologcal crisis is precisely that our present economic activities are storing up problems for people living in the next century.

Sustainability implies intergenerational equality in the benefits that the environment provides.

These benefts are of three kinds. First, the environment gves us raw materials and energy. Sustainability requires that no more resources are taken from the environment than can be regenerated for future use.

Second, the environment assimilates our waste products. Everything that we take from the environment eventually finds a its way back there. Pollution occurs when forms of matter or their concentrations cannot be absorbed.

Sustainability demands that waste disposal is limited to the rates and quantities that can safely be absorbed.

Third, the environment provides various "services" whch regulate life on the planet, such as climate ad ecosystem stability. Key resources such as atmospheric carbon dioxide, ozone and rainforests must be maintained.

Though simplified, these rules make it clear that sustainability cannot be secured at arms length, by manipulating the level of monetary demand in the economy or by other traditional macroeconomic measures.

It has to be acheived by setting targets for ecological impact and constraining economic activity within them.

Sustainability can only be achieved by some form of planning. Market forces cannot guarantee that we meet ecological targets. In (unregulated) markets, it is always likely that "external" costs will be imposed on third parties.

It is the Indians who live in the rainforests and future generations who come after them who will be deprived of the forests' climatic and resource providing functions — not the cattle ranchers or consumers of hamburgers.

Essentially taxation "internalises" those extemal costs which the market generates, so that producer and consumer pay the full cost of production.

There is a major role for direct government intervention.

Land use planning and transport policy can make a significant contrbution. Research and development into new materials and technologies will need to be state supported. Government investment will be requred in environmental clean-up programmes.

In any economic-environmental programme, the distributional effects are very important. The poor must not be made to pay disproportionately for the costs of environmental protection.

This requires public provision of major environmental services (energy, water, natural habitats) and progressive imcome taxation to offset the impact of higher prices likely to result from environmental measures.

A sustainable economy organised on these lines would not rule out economic growth.

Many urgent environmental measures, such as energy conservation, house bulding and renovation, invstment in infrastructure such as sewers, public transport, pollution control schemes and repair and recycling industries would create jobs.

Environmental taxation and other programmes would need to be introduced gradually to give time for research and development of alternative products and processes.

The benefits of a sustainable economy would far outweigh its costs. We know that the Greenhouse Effect and the wholesale destruction of the ecosystems are threatenng the lives of generations not yet born.

But the ecological crisis is already inflicting suffering now. Pollution damges health and shortens the lives of many people across the world.

The destruction of the countryside and natural habitats in urban areas diminishes the pleasure thousands of people enjoy.

Protecting the environment is not something we need to do at a cost of improving living standards. It is itself a way of improving the quality of life for all.

"Communities of Resistance"

A National Conference

Saturday November 11th, 10-6

Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, London E8

Organised by Hackney Council, Refugee Forum, Anti-Fascist Action, Local Groups to look at the implications facing black workers in 1992.

Details from: Tony Panayiotou, Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, London E8, tel. 01-986 3123 ext. 3353.

National Black Students Alliance and Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign

Black struggle and the fight against racism: a conference for the student movement

London School of Economics Students' Union, Houghton Street, London WC2

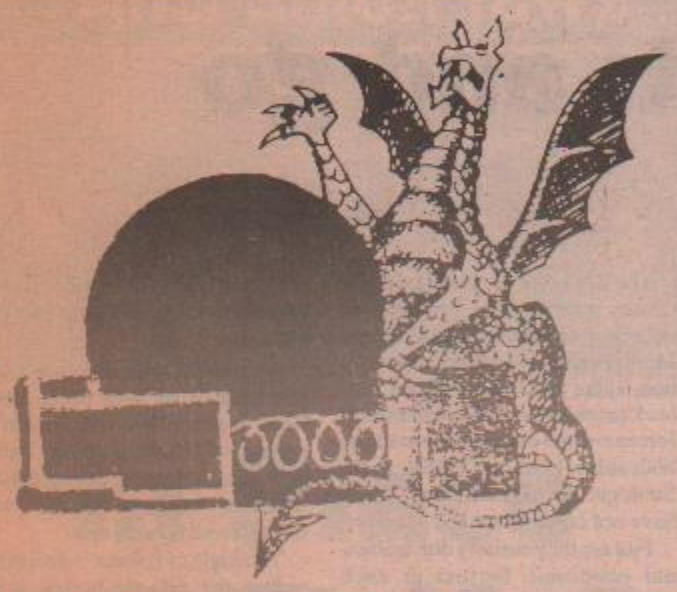
Saturday November 11 10.30am-6.00pm

Speakers include: Stafford Scott; Unmesh Desai; Families of the "Tottenham Three"; National Black Students' Alliance; Labour Party Black Sections

Workshops on: Policing the Community; Immigration and Refugees; Racist Attacks and Fascist Violence

Details and registration from: Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, 79, Tangmere, BWF, London N17 6NB

Wales



Pawb Cymru says: Wylfa Na!

A new movement has been launched to stop a new Pressurised Water Reactor being built at Wylfa on Ynys Mon (Anglesey).

The organisers aim to mobilise opposition throughout England, Wales, and Ireland.

The campaign will build on the work of PAWB (people against Wylfa B) which has been active in Gwynedd for more than a year.

The local campaign in Anglesey shares the same name as the newly launched campaign throughout Wales, Ireland, the Midlands, Manchester, and Merseyside. PAWB is Welsh for fortunate.

They say, "The Wylfa campaign is likely to be less concerned with arguing the case in a Public Inquiry and more with high impact public campaigning."

Local opposition to Wylfa B in Ynys Mon is strong and deeply felt, and in Wales already 19,000 people have registered their objections to Wylfa by sending postcards to Ynys Mon Borough Council. A further 7,000 have been sent since July 31st.

Hugh Richards of the Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance hopes to support as many as 1,000 individual objectors at the public inquiry.

The present mood on Ynys Mon is one of "deepening cynicism" about the outcome of any inquiry. Many now feel that only a campaign of direct action can have any effect. A subgroup of Pawb Cymru is being convened to consider such actions.

According to Hugh Richards, many people feel "vulnerable and bewildered" about the nuclear energy proposals in Wales. Pawb Cymru hopes to act at local level to support such people.

For more information contact:

•CND Cymru, James Stewart (Campaign Worker), c/o 56 Bryn Aeron, Duvant, Swansea SA2 7UX. Tel. 0222-832275.

•Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance, Hugh Richards, PO Box 1, Powys, LD1 5AA. Tel. 09824-362.

From Anti-Nuclear Network Newsletter, available from Haringey Direct Action Group, Box 30, 187 High Road, Wood Green, London N22.

PCBs take to the rail

At least one container load of equipment contaminated with the highly toxic PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) has been carried by rail, bound for the Rechem plant in Pontypool.

A demonstration outside the retreatment plant recently called for its closure on safety grounds.

The load was transported from Harwich Parkstone Quay to Cardiff, and from there by road.

This is the first instance of carriage of PCBs by train. The train driver was not informed of the containers' contents, nor was advance warning given to Cardiff Council about its arrival and further carriage by road.

Rail unions have no agreement with BR over transportation of PCBs.

"The NEC was beaten on arms spending and that shows there's still some fight left in the Party. We won't be able to fund our social programme if we carry on thinking bombs are wonderful."
Alice Mahon MP, after Labour Party Conference voted to reduce "Defence" spending

Free speech on Ireland?

Fight the ban!

October 19th is the anniversary of the broadcasting ban imposed by the Home Secretary on 11 Irish organisations, including Sinn Fein.

This means a democratically elected party with one MP and 39 local Councillors is denied access to the media beamed into 99% of the homes in Britain.

By NADINE FINCH

TV and radio stations have interpreted the ban in its widest sense and excluded anyone who shares Sinn Fein's belief that the Irish people should be allowed to determine their own future.

Ex MP Bernadette McAliskey and Brighton Councillor Richard Stanton are but two so-called "supporters" who have been banned in the last year.

The ban has also been used to silence criticism of government attitudes to law enforcement and civil liberties. Errol Smalley, uncle of one of the Guildford Four, was dropped from a local radio programme.

This wide interpretation reveals both the real intent of the government and the complicity of the broadcasting companies.

The Pogues

The IBA stated that it banned the Pogues song *Streets of Sorrow/Birmingham Six* on the grounds that:

"the song alleges some convicted terrorists are not guilty and goes on to suggest that Irish people are at a disadvantage in British courts of law.

"That allegation might support or solicit or invite support for an organisation proscribed by the Home Secretary's directive."

The government was astute in enlisting the help of the media, as the latter have a long and inglorious history of self-censorship and deception when it comes to Ireland.

James Connolly described it: "Clever manipulation of the news items, by an unscrupulous use of their power to suppress truth and suggest when apparently only retailing the daily happenings."



PHOTO: Frankie Quin

Silenced by the ban on Sinn Fein: Martin McGuiness, Tom Hartley, and also Bernadette McAliskey (not a member, but still covered by British dictats).

The measures are a clear violation of the human right protected under the European Convention to "receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority."

In the face of threatened strike action by the National Union of Journalists, the media promised that "health warnings" would explain that programmes on the Irish issue were made under restricted conditions. These warnings have not materialised.

Anniversary

In the year of the 20th anniversary of British troops going into the North of Ireland countless versions of Ireland's history have been peddled in the media with some of its most pivotal figures denied any chance of speaking for themselves.

Protest until recently has been muted. But the suppression of political views and the Labour Party's collusion with it led to the formation of a broad-based Free Speech on Ireland Ad Hoc Committee.

Committee

This Committee, sponsored and supported by the Socialist Movement, was initially convened by "Information on Ireland", well known for its work on media bias.

The Troops Out Movement, Irish in Britain Representation Group, the SLD, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, NUJ, ACTT, and individual members of the LCI are amongst those who have given support.

The Committee has organised a number of events to mark the anniversary of the ban. These events will support others organised by the NUJ and other media trade unions which have to implement the ban.

The CPBF has organised a petition, which has attracted support from artists, authors, lawyers, MPs, and many others.

Organised

On the day there will be a march from BBC Portland Place at 12 noon organised by the NUJ to a rally at the Dominion Theatre, Tottenham Court Road, at 1pm.

TV and Radio Stations will be picketed at the same time. A lobby of parliament is planned for 2.30pm by the NUJ. The Petition will be handed in at 10 Downing Street.

In London, the Committee would like to urge those who oppose the Ban to join the NUJ's march and rally. Outside London, pickets, marches, and meetings are being organised in many large cities. For details, please contact 01-609 1743 (1-6pm).

Labour Party members should press their representatives to take part in activities.

Bryan Gould recently pledged that a future Labour government would remove the ban. But the Labour Party still refuses to share platforms or meet officially with Sinn Fein and many Labour Councils ban them from their buildings.

Black Sections

Scottish Labour demand

Scottish Labour Party Black Sections has called on the Labour Party to address the issue of institutional racism in the country.

The demand follows recent attacks on the Scottish Asian Action Committee (SAAC) office and the Labour Party headquarters in Glasgow.

A brick was hurled through the window of the SAAC office and British National Party stickers were pasted on its walls. The police removed them but no arrests were made.

The Labour Party has called a "Day of action against racism" on Saturday November 25th. However, the Scottish Black Sections are concerned that the Labour Party, in addressing racism, will not look into its own drawbacks.

"The racism of the Labour Party most recently manifested itself in the run up to the Vauxhall by-election," said the Black Sections.

From *Caribbean Times*

Labour Party Conference

Lesbian & gay rights



Victory!

Victory four times out of four for LCLGR's Conference campaigns is a pretty remarkable record.

Victory this year was even more astonishing, given the drift of the Conference and the opposition of the NEC.

Excellent organisation clearly had something to do with it. Not a union escaped lobbying.

And by the time of Thursday afternoon's debate literally hundreds of delegates were wearing LCLGR stickers, giving the issue a higher profile than any other that week.

By Peter Purton
LCLGR

But that alone cannot explain the dramatic victory by 3.7 million votes to 2.3 million, announced on Friday morning to massive cheering and substantial press interest.

We had been running our campaign since the NEC voted in May by 17-11 to exclude the commitment to an equal age of consent and a repeal of all discriminatory laws from the Policy Review.

Our pressure had already told by the start of Conference, when the NEC vote against our Composite was down to 14.

Had three missing members not been at the LCC rally, we could actually have reversed the leadership position before Conference even started!

A vocal lobby at Monday lunchtime, much assisted by Brighton Area Action Against Section 28, was addressed by Peter Hain and Ken Livingstone and alerted delegates to the issues involved.

In all its campaigning, LCLGR has adopted a united front approach towards the Labour and trade union leaderships. Whatever our many differences on other questions, we have worked together with anyone who supports our demands for equality.

We have found allies at all levels of the movement, including support in the NEC itself, from MPs and MEPs, and from trade union leaders.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee gave unstinted backing to our campaign and a wide range of people were willing to lobby others on our behalf.

We also succeeded in winning big support from rank and file trade unionists and party members. The warmth of feeling for us at Conference was inspiring and also a testimony to our success in winning a hearing for the cause of lesbian and gay equality.

Our demands were clearly identified as basic socialist positions for civil liberties and democratic rights, and the leadership's position was untenable and indefensible.

Although some opposed us because they do not think we should be equal, the commonest argument against us was "electoral liability".

It will be a combination of our support at rank and file and leadership level which will be the only protection against the likelihood that the Party leadership will ignore this vote when it comes to election time.

It will require the moblisation of powerful forces from the labour movement and lesbian and gay movements to keep us in our rightful place on the agenda. This year's victory places us in the best position from which to maintain the campaign.

All temptations either to complacency after the result or to giving up the struggle must be resisted — because we know Kinnock and Hattersley cannot be trusted to implement the policy.

The form the campaign now takes will be decided by the LCLGR General Members meeting in London on October 28/29th, in which all lesbian and gay socialists can participate by joining LCLGR.

Join LCLGR:
Send your name, address, trade union and/or Labour Party branch, and a cheque (£3 unwaged, £6 low waged, £10 high waged) to PO Box 306, London N5.

Nuclear *RE*-armament

"Keep Trident: and go for broke!"

The next Labour government will keep three out of the four Trident nuclear submarines ordered from the US by Thatcher.

Labour is now committed to possessing nuclear weapons and that means accepting NATO nuclear strategy of "flexible response", i.e. early use of nuclear weapons in any conflict.

A Labour PM would therefore have no option but to press the nuclear button.

After the vote, Labour MP John Gilbert said, "Three Tridents are not enough to defend this country. We must have the fourth."

He and others will now campaign for this and will further demand that labour keeps nuclear weapons as long as any other country has them.

Labour's leaders have betrayed their Party and those who put their trust in them. They will not convince the voters because it is clear that this fundamental shift in policy was made for one reason only: to make Labour "more electable".

But the reverse is the case.

Barbara Switzer of MSF, moving the unilateral nuclear disarmament composite, called the policy shift, "an unprincipled shift of expediency which will convince very few."

Voters will either believe that the Labour Party is dishonest — and still wants to get rid of nuclear weapons — or will perceive the Labour Party as inconsistent and unprincipled because it is now saying the exact opposite of what it said at the last election.

By Joy Hurcombe
Chair, Labour CND
(personal capacity)

MPs who won their seats as unilateralists will now go back to the same voters on a platform of keeping and possibly using nuclear weapons.

Even newscaster Robin Day, interviewing Roy Hattersley, thought it rather strange that, when the rest of the world was now on the road to disarmament, the British Labour Party chose just this time to reject policies which have been vindicated by world events.

Gerald Kaufman, in his introductory remarks to the defence debate, reviewed the peace initiatives of the past year as if they had just happened on their own, without any outside factors forcing the pace for disarmament.

The truth is that Kohl had to give in to the powerful popular pressure against modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons mobilised by the West German peace movement.

The INF talks, the dismantling of Cruise missiles, the progress on reducing chemical weapons, the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks in Geneva which may lead to reduction of conventional forces and the concessions made on both sides, USA and USSR, in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, have not come about in a vacuum.

Nor are they entirely due to internal economic factors in each country. They have occurred in a world in which masses of its people have been on the streets demanding an end to the threat of world annihilation.

Are we really to believe that Gorbachev is delighted that the British Labour Party will target three Tridents with nine times the power of Polaris at his country?

Is this what he meant when he said that Labour would make good partners in the disarmament process?

No doubt he will be disappointed to find Kinnock represents little improvement on Thatcher, especially if the John Gilberts get their way.

We have now to renew the fight to commit Labour to the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

We will have to restate the basic case against nuclear weapons, reminding our leaders that nuclear weapons far from protecting us actually increase the risk of nuclear holocaust. They cannot be used; they destroy both the target and the user.

By accepting Trident, we forfeit our chance to take independent steps to peace. We will remain the subject of US domination. Trident is neither independent nor a deterrent and will cost us the earth, literally and figuratively.

The logic of Labour's decision to reduce the defence budget to the average of the other West European countries (carried in Brighton by over two thirds on a card vote) implies however that the war on want must be the priority of the next Labour government.

We could fund this war by a single action: cancel Trident, refuse to pay any penalty clauses, and dismantle all nuclear weapons and nuclear bases.

Gerald Kaufman says that we must have a nuclear capability so that after the START talks we can take the initiative on further talks to get rid of nuclear weapons. This is a vicious circle with a time-bomb ticking away in its centre.

The present disarmament talks have taken out just 4% of the world's total of nuclear weapons. Trident would replace that 4%. Labour's new policy is one of nuclear re-armament, not "multilateral" disarmament.

Black Sections

Conference cancels "Black & White Minstrel Show"

"The NEC couldn't get a single black person, not even one of Hattersley's poodles, to defend their 'black and white minstrel show," declared Martha Osamor, Vice Chair of Black Sections.

She was speaking after the NEC's proposals for a "black" socialist society dominated by white voting members had been rejected at Conference by 1,465,000 votes.

By MARK SEATON

Last year Conference instructed the NEC to come back with proposals for "direct representation for black members".

A Working Party was set up and despite its clear right wing majority recommended to the NEC in July that an affiliated Black Socialist Society (more or less on the lines of NOLS) be set up.

Black Sections, despite some reservations, endorsed the proposals as a "basis for negotiation" and a way out of the Party's deadlock on back organisation.

There was no way the likes of racist Roy Hattersley were going to accept anything which gave even a pittance of real power to black Party members.

After a fierce lobbying by the Walworth Road hit-squad, and a speech by Kinnock denouncing the Working Party's proposals as "institutionalised apartheid", they were defeated by 14-12 with Blunkett, Cook and the YS's Hannah Sell abstaining.

If any two of these had supported the proposals they would have passed because Skinner was in the chair with his casting vote to hand.

But worse was to come. Kinnock himself proposed an amendment: white people would be given full voting rights in the new Black Socialist Society, though they would not be able to stand as officers or delegates.

This was agreed by 20-5, with only Benn, Livingstone, Skinner, Richardson, and Dunwoody (Gwyneth is against *any* black organisation in the Party) voting against.

After their performance on this issue, Beckett, Short, Gould, Cook, Blunkett, Lestor, et al have forfeited any claims to democratic or anti-racist credentials.

The purpose of the Kinnock amendment could not be clearer. The hypocrisy of the warnings about "apartheid" and "racial exclusiveness" cannot be denied in light of the proposed exclusion of white people from office-holding but not from voting.

And the fact that another amendment to withhold voting rights from white members was rejected by 16



Narendra Makanji,

NEC members reveals that the clear motive throughout was to entrench white domination.

Unable to resist any longer the powerful demands for some kind of action on black self-representation, the right wing wanted to institutionalise a "safe" black leadership under white tutelage.

Their proposals amounted to giving men a vote at women's sections, pensioners a vote in the YS, and electricians a vote in the NUM.

It would have stolen power from the black rank and file, stripped black officers and delegates of any political credibility and denied black Labour politicians any base of support within the Party other than *white* members.

All these points and more were made in a hard-hitting Conference debate. One after another, well-prepared Black Section supporters came to the rostrum to denounce the new "colonial district administrators" and the "Choc-ice" society (a thin black coating concealing a hard white centre).

Black Sections were well organised and unambiguous. Their concerted pressure on unions and CLPs was effective.

The NEC proposals were thrown out, without a word being said from the floor in their defence (and not much from the platform either). They are unlikely to see the light of day again.

A composite setting out the Black Socialist Society option initially recommended by the Working Party (and Bill Morris) lost by only 648,000 votes and the straight Black Sections option attracted 1,050,000, an increase on last year.

Black Sections National Chair Narendra Makanji was jubilant:

"The NEC has been mightily embarrassed. Their case was demolished. Now we'll target the block votes still holding out against us. Black members in the GMB, COHSE, UCW will force their leaders to change their tune."

And Martha Osamor vowed: "We'll step up our campaign to get black people to join the Labour Party and to force Labour to take up the issues that matter to the black community."

Anti-union laws



The "Wapping dispute" fell a victim of Tory anti-union laws. Labour wants to keep the Tory laws, so it can put workers down in the same way.

"In Place of Strife" – Mark II

It's back to 1969 and Harold Wilson's notorious "In Place of Strife" anti-trade union Bill.

Labour Party Conference has taken us there by voting not to repeal all the Tory anti-trade union laws and by accepting the Policy Review document *People at Work*.

Conference voted to retain major sections of the Tory laws, going far beyond the provisions of "In Place of Strife" — which involved powers to order would-be strikers back to work for a 28 day "cooling off period".

Michael Meacher, who presented the Policy Review to Conference, proposed some modest modifications to the present Tory legal battery ranged against the unions.

By ALAN THORNETT

These modifications included restoration of trade union rights at GCHQ, strengthening of Industrial Tribunals, and curbs on the sacking of workers for taking "legitimate" strike action, and are all valuable.

But they would not alter the fundamental position of the unions in relation to the law.

There will be no restoration of trade union immunities, no change in the laws on balloting, no change in the laws on picketing, and the laws on secondary action will remain in place, though modified.

According to Meacher, the right to secondary action would be restored only where workers have a "genuine interest" in supporting others.

In the Conference debate Arthur Scargill referred to "In Place of Strife" and asked what Labour laws on secondary action would really mean, stressing the importance to weaker sections of the movement of solidarity action.

Incumbent

"It is incumbent on all workers to take a stand in their support," Scargill said.

What constitutes a "genuine interest" and who would decide when it existed has not yet been clarified. But responding to Scargill on *Newsnight* after the Conference debate, Meacher stated, "miners' do *not* have a genuine interest in a nurses' dispute."

By the time the Tories have ripped into the ambiguities of the Policy Review we will find that there will be no right to take "secondary" or solidarity action at all under a Kinnock Labour government.

This may be precisely what right wing union leaders have in mind. Bill Jordan attacked Scargill from the Conference rostrum:

"The armies of mass picketers have been demobilised and the next Labour government must not call them up again... Today's Party is a party of law-makers, not law-breakers."

We were told repeatedly by Meacher that Labour would not put the unions above the law! In fact, trade unions have never been above the law (unlike the employers).

From 1906 until the 1980s, unions did have protection against legal action for collectively withdrawing labour. The Labour Party was formed precisely to fight for that right.

Balloting, unless it is postal, is not wrong in principle. But it should be up to the unions to decide their own consultation processes, not have them imposed by the courts.

The legal imposition of balloting allows the courts to intervene at every stage of a strike ballot or an election; and in turn allows the Tories or managers to manipulate the courts and legal procedures.

Proposals

A major part of Meacher's proposals, which has received little attention, is the creation of a specialist court for trade union matters — a new version of Edward Heath's hated National Industrial Relations Court, abolished by Labour in 1975.

Meacher argued this would avoid the problem of inconsistencies emerging from courts and judges with no experience of industrial relations.

In this context, it doesn't mean much to talk about abolishing sequestration. If unions are to be subject to laws restricting industrial action, they are going to be punished if they break them — whether by sequestration, massive fines, or imprisonment.

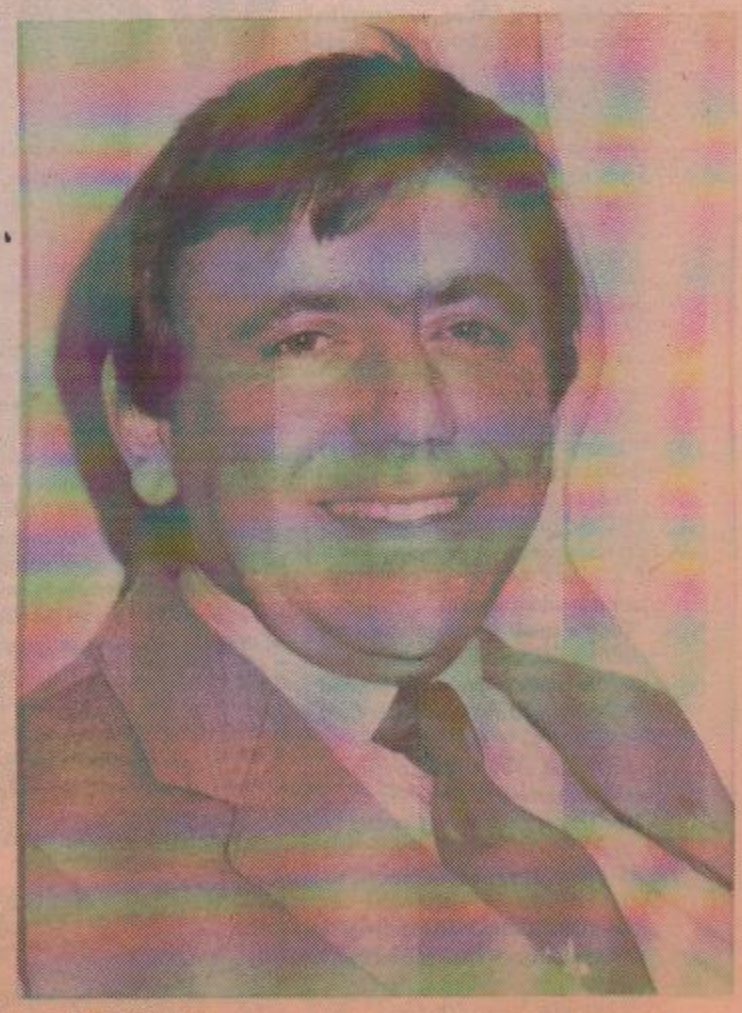
If fines are imposed and the "offences" are repeated or the fines not paid, those responsible will be held in contempt of court and ultimately gaoled, as they were during the time of the Industrial Relations Act.

The right-wing were particularly jubilant over the result of this Conference vote. Eric Hammond said he "wholeheartedly supported the policy document" and it was "the best week of his life."

Interview: Pete Willsman

Stand by Labour!

PETE WILLSMAN is a leading member of the CAMPAIGN for LABOUR PARTY DEMOCRACY (CLPD) and has served for many years now as the CLP representative on the Party's Conference Arrangements Committee. *Labour Briefing* talked to Peter about democratising the Party, building the Socialist Movement, and other issues which raised serious disagreements on the left at this year's Party Conference.



Pete Willsman

***LB:* What were your impressions of Conference?**

PW: Kinnock's said he's going to ignore the two victories we had on military spending and gays and lesbians.

This gives us an opportunity to argue for Conference sovereignty and against the Edmonds proposals. In CLPD's view opposition to the Edmonds proposals must be a major focus in the CLPs.

***LB:* How much emphasis would you give to organising outside the Party?**

PW: Ken Livingstone made an important point when he said Party members don't like to see MPs slagging each other off in public. It is important to keep our arguments within the Party as much as possible so the left can build up its strength.

In CLPD's view the Socialist Movement takes key people away from the battle inside the Party. Running about proseltysing doesn't have a lot of impact. Organising slates and getting resolutions passed is more effective.

The *Tribune* "Brains Trusts" in the 1950s did no good because you can paper the walls with fine pamphlets but unless you can get a decision and carry it through you're not making much improvement.

***LB:* But surely to renew the left within the Party we must link up with those struggling outside?**

PW: I fundamentally disagree. People have been making that argument since the beginning of time. But people will only join the Labour Party when the left's making gains.

There's been a hundred and one different organisations outside the Labour Party. Milliband and Wainwright are always forming something and it's got them precisely nowhere.

I'm not saying organisation within the Party is the end of the world. It's like Lenin said, you need the right combination of organisation and conditions.

***LB:* But political conditions have changed dramatically since the beginning of the early 80s.**

PW: I'm not saying I'm against the Socialist Movement but at the end of the day it won't be worth a row of beans. We wouldn't have achieved reselection, the electoral college, or the gains of the early 80s if we had just been running around at Socialist Movement meetings.

***LB:* If we hadn't had the peace movement we wouldn't have won unilateralism in the early 80s and without the anger of the NUPE rank and file at the Callaghan government we wouldn't have shifted NUPE to the left. You want to campaign within the Party but you seem hostile to liking up with those fighting outside.**

PW: I'm not saying that. On specific campaigns you do have to link up with those outside, for example, around the Poll Tax. In such campaigns you have to operate in a different framework.

***LB:* In the early 80s we were seen to be the real democrats fighting to give Party members a greater say. Today we seem to have lost this initiative to the right. Don't we need to set our own agenda on this issue?**

PW: If you're not careful you will end up fighting on the right's ground. You can get carried away with all this nonsense about democracy trotted out by the right wing for their own reasons.

If you're not careful you end up supporting Gavin Laird when he gets up and attacks the block vote.

We should stand firm on traditional ground. It may be the case that in some unions the block vote is not delivered in a democratic fashion but that is a matter for the members of those unions.

The biggest strength of the Party is that it is based on the organised labour movement. The ruling class sees this as its biggest threat — they've always attacked the block vote and they want to smash it.

If we're not careful we'll end up with an anti-Marxist attitude towards democracy.

We don't look at the block vote and say, "this is more or less democratic." We look at the block vote from the perspective of existing in a totally hostile capitalist system.

The block vote is a defensive mechanism. It may not be perfect democracy in terms of bourgeois academia but it's effective in terms of defending the movement.

The fact that the trade unions have over 90% of the votes at Conference is a little bit over the top. In CLPD's view it should be 60%.

But the unions should keep the power as the Party is the political expression of the working class within the system.

Has Conference a Future?
£1 (+22p postage) from:
CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH.

Behind the scenes...

Andrea, the delegate from Birmingham Edgbaston, was seconding a strong composite in the health debate. She was put under pressure to remit the motion and in the end the decision was taken out of her hands and made by the mover of the motion from Kingston.
Andrea told Briefing what had happened:
"I spoke to the Kingston delegate, who said that she'd been told that NUPE wanted the resolution remitted. I asked which particular bits of the resolution they were unhappy about and didn't get anywhere.
"I assumed that it was the bit at the end about nationalising drug companies. I spoke to various delegations and couldn't really get any information and was treated very rudely.
"Someone from MSF told me that they didn't want the composite in because otherwise it would spoil the health debate, and I thought that was really outrageous."

After Stalinism — What?

Around the globe, Stalinism is collapsing, leaving in its wake a welter of economic, political, social, and national crises.

In the Soviet Union, *perestroika* threatens to turn into what Boris Kagarlitsky calls "market Stalinism". In response to last summer's upsurge in the mines, the Supreme Soviet has now voted to ban strikes in key industries (including mines, railways, transport, communications, and power supply).

Strikes in other industries will only be allowed if supported by a two thirds majority in a secret ballot. Motions from left wing deputies to give legal recognition, resources, and powers to the rank and file strike committees set up in the mines and elsewhere were overwhelmingly defeated.

The silver lining to this grim cloud of repression is that it is clearly a response to a perceived threat of a mass workers' rebellion against marketisation.

Only a small foretaste of such a rebellion was certainly all the excuse the Chinese Stalinists needed for the monstrous violence they meted out to dissidents (among them workers) in Tienanmen Square (see report from Hong Kong Trade Union Education Centre).

Meanwhile, in Budapest the (Stalinist) Hungarian Socialist Workers Party attempts to reconstitute itself as the (Stalinist?) Socialist Party — amidst ideological chaos and personal acrimony.

With elections looming, the Hungarian Stalinists are desperate to distance themselves from their own discredited past. They appear now to differ from the main opposition, the Hungarian Democratic Front, mainly on the question of the degree and pace of privatisation — and with it, mass unemployment, cuts in living standards, and repression of working class dissent.

In Hungary and throughout Eastern Europe, the debacle of bureaucratic rule has brought a resurgence of nationalist forces of all kinds. Here, Martin Wicks offers some impressions of these currents in Latvia and Georgia. In future issues we hope to bring readers direct accounts from other regions.

Whatever one's assessment of the nationalist movements or of the many ideological alternatives emerging in the former bureaucratic fortresses, there is no doubt that for socialists in the West the eclipse of Stalinism is both a major challenge and an opportunity.

It was inevitable that the prolonged repression of democratic and national aspirations by (and the economic failure of) the Stalinist regimes would be followed by a chaotic upsurge of political and social forces, both left and right, and some whose identity remains confused and contradictory.

The Adam Smith Institute can descend on Warsaw or Budapest with an easy-to-understand privatisation/free market/big debt package and find an eager audience.

For socialists, trying to carve out a clear alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism, it's not so easy. But, as the articles here make clear, it's a necessity. In the coming months *Briefing* will try to cover — from as close up as we can get — all the complex, fascinating developments in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and China.

Clearly, whatever happens there will have much to do with the ultimate fate of world socialism.

China: repression continues

banner of workers' independence

The Workers' Autonomous Federation emerged in May 1989 as a harbinger of a future independent trade union movement in China.

It arose alongside the student demonstrations which began in April 1989 and backed their call for greater democracy, an end to corruption, a more open and accountable government, and autonomous student unions.

From a report by the Hong Kong Trade Union Education Centre

Under the red banner of the Workers' Autonomous Federation and slogans calling for democracy and freedom of association, between 50 and 100 workers erected a tented headquarters on the outskirts of the students' tents at Tienanmen Square in Beijing in mid-May.

Among the core participants, there were steelworkers, railway workers, aviation workers, restaurant cooks, students, and lawyers.

Apart from Beijing, workers at the camp also came from other areas such as Tianjin, Shanxi, the North Eastern cities, and Jiangsu, and ranged in age from early 20s to late 40s.

Their action was the first open attempt by workers to set up an autonomous organisation outside the official All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU).

Organisers

The organisers launched their action by issuing pamphlets and leaflets to publicise criticisms of the present labour policies and union structure and to spread calls for a genuine and democratic workers' movement.

They also set up a public address system in Tienanmen Square to explain their demands.

The organisers worked in harsh conditions, staging round-the-clock pickets in the Square under flimsy tent roofs, in blazing heat, rain and cold, with a lack of food and sleep.

At any time during the day, hundreds and sometimes thousands of workers and residents crowded around the Federation's loudspeakers, listening to the speeches.

Whenever the union managed to print some handouts (which was sporadic due to a lack of printing facilities) the crowds rushed up to grab a copy. Demand always outstripped supply manyfold.

The Hong Kong Trade Union Education Centre paid daily visits to the Federation's headquarters in Tienanmen Square between June 1st and the massacre. The situation was already growing tense.

Three of the Federation's leaders had been detained by the Public Security Bureau earlier in the week. Although they were later released, they were under close surveillance, and so remained in hiding.

The other leaders were also pursued by Public Security agents and therefore could only appear at odd times.

During our meetings we discussed the issues and problems the union founders were addressing.

They said they felt the priorities were to build up their network among grassroots workers, consolidate the organisation internally, and develop the membership, resources, leadership skills, and infrastructure needed for the new federation.

They saw the main obstacle as the antagonisms coming from the government and the government-run union movement, the ACFTU. The authorities were labelling them an unlawful body comprised of unruly elements.

They were also concerned that there was resistance from some demonstrating students towards workers' involvement in the democracy campaign. These students apparently felt the need to restrict their campaign purely to students and intellectuals.

The Federation focused on the corrupt bureaucracy, the existence of a privileged elite, the wide wage discrepancy between workers and plant managers, the lack of workplace democracy or genuine workers' representation in the policy-making process, poor labour protection and working conditions, and the deterioration of workers' living standards in recent years.

On June 3rd, the Federation's leaders were still talking of finding ways to legalise their organisation, by liaising with the some relatively sympathetic sections within the ACFTU, and by gathering support from the democratic political parties.

Autonomous

They were insistent that they wanted to organise their Autonomous Federation through constitutional and legal means and stated that they did not oppose the rule of the Chinese Communist Party.

The Autonomous Federation camp was sited towards the North East of the Square. On the evening before the massacre, troops were massing at that end of the Square and it was clear that a confrontation of some sort was about to occur.



"Their goals were radical, their actions courageous, and their means peaceful."

The members of the union were among the most courageous of the demonstrators. Holding their union banner high, they marched to the front of the crowds facing the waiting troops. From this corner of the Square the massacre began.

Students who survived the massacre told us that most of the representatives of the Autonomous Workers Federation were killed in the attack.

On June 8th, three days after the massacre, the regime announced that the Workers' Autonomous Federation and the student Autonomous Federation were counter-revolutionary organisations, and that they would round up and arrest activists in these groups.

On June 9th, demonstrators numbering more than 100,000 rallied in Shanghai. Among the banners were those from the Shanghai Workers Autonomous Federation. It was reported that at least one thousand workers rallied behind this particular banner.

There were also reports that similar independent trade union banners were raised in Guangzhou following the Beijing massacre.

After the massacre, on June 12th, Chinese Central Television showed a badly beaten leader of the Shanghai Autonomous Workers' Federation who had been detained by the Public Security Bureau.

On the same day, the Chinese government called on official unions to mobilise workers to demolish independent workers' federations.

Initially, the ACFTU showed support for the students' pro-democracy movement in the capital city but, shortly before the violent crackdown, they backtracked on their position.

On June 2nd the ACFTU issued a statement in the Beijing Daily, denouncing the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation as unlawful and calling on the government to crush the pickets and other activities organised by the federation.

At this moment, the Chinese authorities are waging a massive and brutal witch-hunt of the pro-democracy student and labour leaders.

Massacre

Before the massacre, one of their main objectives was to seek ways



PHOTO: Martine Stead

Solidarity demonstration in London before the massacre.

Pola

The UK Support Committee for support for the petition b Please put the text of the pe labour movement organisat affiliation to the UK Suppor subscription to our bulletin, cost of £10.
Please make cheques payab Party Appeal, and send the Ladbroke Grove, London W

"The coalition government marketise the economy and private interests at home an profoundly affect working p social inequality and provok We, the undersigned, call u government:
•to legalise the formation of Poland by socialists, such a Party-Democratic Revolutio •to respect the right to strik basic human freedom."



PHOTO: Tim Nolan

o legalise their organisation rough peaceful means. They were lso planning for grassroots obilising throughout the country.
When asked if they wanted to sh for the right to strike (which as taken away from the Chinese eople in the constitutional amend- ents in 1982)., their reply was no: ey just wanted to organise within e laws and constitution of China.
The actions of the Federation arked the first open attempt by hinese workers to fight for their ght to organise independently nce 1949. Their goals were radi- l: their will was genuine; their ac- ons courageous; and their means eaceful.

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Poland plans to sell off national assets to abroad. This will ople. It will deepen unemployment. on the new Polish

olitical parties in the Polish Socialist (PSP-DR);
by trade unionists as a

Latvia and Georgia

Fighting for national rights

It could hardly have been a better time to visit Riga and Tbilisi, the capitals of two of the countries recently convulsed by movements for national rights.

Riga is the capital of Latvia, annexed by Stalin in 1939 as part of the deal with Hitler. European in appearance, it has none of the queues of Russia.

In Riga's main street, Lenin lela, it was common to see groups of people huddled together in animated discussion. They moved from group to group to find the most interesting debate.

We met two political groupings.

One was the National Independence Movement, who were selling badges with the colours of the old national flag and one in English demanding secession from the USSR. It had a swastika and a hammer and sickle on it — obviously sent in by Latvian emigres.

The other grouping was a workers' organisation, recently set up, selling a roughly duplicated "Latvian Worker".

Although they spoke only a few words of English, they understood the difference between autonomy and independence and were in favour of the latter.

They showed us a copy of the paper of *Pamyat* (the extreme Russian nationalist organisation) which they described as fascist.

The recent demonstration against the Stalin-Hitler pact showed the level of support for independence, which has infiltrated even the Baltic states' Communist Parties.

In Lithuania the local branch of the *Komsomol* has already split from the all-Union organisation.

By Martin Wicks

The statement by the CPSU Central Committee condemning the nationalists was rejected by the local CPs, who argued it could not be a CC statement when none of the CC members from the Baltic had even been aware of its drafting.

Flying to Georgia via Leningrad, one is immediately struck by the abundance of fruit and vegetables in shops in Tbilisi compared to the queues in Russia — a classic example of bureaucratic mismanagement.

Resentment against Russian chauvinism is well founded. If you want to build a house in Tbilisi, you have to get permission from a Moscow Ministry.

Recently the Estonian parliament discussed the refusal of a Moscow Ministry to allow a new type of cake to be produced.

A Georgian National Forum has been formed, bringing together 14 organisations, all strictly speaking illegal, but operating openly. Differences existed between them on tactics, but they were all in favour of independence from Moscow.

While there, we saw two open air rallies. One had about 500 people in attendance. The atmosphere was very tense, everybody watching for strangers or Europeans.

The other was pointed out to us by a young Georgian from the wall of Stalin Park which overlooks the city from the top of a high hill.

I asked the man how many Georgians were in favour of independence. He laughed, insisting that "all Georgians" want independence. He obviously wasn't including Party leaders.

The Park holds a massive plynth on which once rested a statue of that most famous of Georgians. It had long since been enthusiastically wrenched off the plynth. The same fate has befallen the plaque on the seminary where he studied. Stalin is widely viewed as a national traitor.

Political

As in Riga, there was much political activity in the streets with paper sellers and stalls everywhere.

Just a few yards away from the hotel was a wall poster site covered with papers. It had the message in English: "Georgia demands back her liberty."

We were taken on a tour of a linen factory and met the factory manager and the production engineer (who turned out to be the Party organiser in the factory) — both Russians.



Now they're queuing to eat too

We were led to the main factory building up narrow stairs, having to duck on one occasion, due to the low ceiling. The sewing machinists were in a cramped and dark room, operating ancient looking machines.

Workshop

In the main workshop, the women (all were women apart from the manager) were operating saws. There was not a single guard on the machines. They pushed the material onto a perpendicular blade.

Health and safety was dealt with, we were told, by "a special department".

There was no sign of fire precautions. The single fire hose, hung up in a box, was covered with a layer of dust so thick it had probably not been touched since the factory was opened.

Made of canvas, it looked perished and not up to withstanding water pressure. There was no fire escape — just narrow stairs...

Although retirement age for women is 55, a number of women were over retirement age, a couple in their seventies. They are forced to work by the low pensions, although these are just about to be raised.

Soviet Union

On the importance of being Marxist

BORIS KAGARLITSKY, a leading activist in the Moscow Popular Front, came to London last month to give the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture. Here is a short extract from his speech.



Lenin looks askance at market Stalinism

The ruling group is inclining more and more towards a technocratic path by orientating itself to the values of Western society understood in a very narrow and primitive sense.

The West to which the liberal elite and bureaucracy aspire is not a 3,000 year old civilisation, but technology and consumption.

The desire to be part of this earthly paradise dictates a policy aimed at copying Western methods irrespective of the extent to which these methods are appropriate to our social, cultural and economic levels.

Nowadays, there is little to distinguish the Soviet ruling elite from the pro-Western technocratic and modernising elites in a majority of developing countries.

Of course, nobody intends to repudiate socialist phraseology formally, but there is becoming less and less need for it.

At first, while the ideological contours of perestroika were still being defined, Gorbachev and other official figures readily enunciated slogans like "More Democracy is More Socialism!".

They referred readily to the benefits of self-management or workers' participation in decision-making.

Now, this is all a thing of the past. The outlines of new ideological priorities are becoming clearer little by little.

In the pages of the official press (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*) it is once again possible to read criticism of the Russian philosopher, Berdyaev, and of something he did not understand or did not realise.

Capitalism

This time he is accused of not realising "the truth of capitalism" and of being unable to overcome completely Marxist influences in his creative work.

Ogonek and other publications tell us about the crimes of the Bolsheviks, who killed the last Russian Tsar. And criticism of Trotsky and Trotskyism is assuming a scale unprecedented since Stalin's time.

This is in no way a manifestation of pluralism or evidence of the weakness of censorship. The censors operate and interfere when they come across something genuinely dangerous to the system — in its present incarnation.

Journalists are even complaining that, at the end of 1989, censorship is becoming even stricter.

Twenty years ago Isaac Deutscher spoke about the ex-Communists' conscience. In rejecting Stalinism these ex-Communists do not just defend the values of the bourgeoisie but defend them with a traditional Stalinist intolerance.

This time the ex-Communists' conscience has become a kind of collective identity of some of the people controlling the most influential sections of the official media in the USSR. (...)

We are encountering the logical contradiction of a post-Thermidorian regime.

Stalin's Thermidor, as with the French Thermidor, was essentially a counter-revolution which grew out of the Revolution itself and is to a significant degree the continuation and completion of the revolution.

Efforts to delineate Bolshevism from Stalinism and efforts to reduce Bolshevism to a precursor of Stalinism are therefore equally inconceivable.

In its turn the regime, which has made first rate use of the revolutionary heritage for its own ideological justification, would this time be happy to dispense with this heritage, but can not.

The promise of a "non-capitalist" road is still essential for the maintenance of the system's political stability, even if this slogan is contradicted in practice.

On the other hand, what we are witnessing today is not the formation of a bourgeoisie and capitalist relations in the Western sense of the term, but the appearance of a hideous monster, a kind of *negative convergence* which combines the worst features of both systems: Western and Eastern.

We call this Market Stalinism. How viable this monster will prove is a good question. Most probably, it won't last very long.

The Women's Page

Labour Party Conference

Quotas, quotas, quotas everywhere – and not a jot of power!

Women played a greater part in this year's Conference than ever before — or so we were told.

By Women for Socialism

Apparently, 38% of all speeches were by women, and more time was devoted to the Women's Organisation debate than at any previous Conference.

And we passed a motion supporting quotas for women, a great step forward for women's liberation!

Or was it?

Like the rest of Conference, the women's debate was a set-piece played out for the TV cameras. Woman after woman rose to support the motion demanding a 40% quota for women at all levels of the Party.

No woman, however, got the chance to express the widespread concern about quotas that does exist from a feminist point of view.

We should have no illusions about the women's debate. The (male) trade union and Labour leaderships decided to support the quota proposal because they realise the electoral necessity of having more women in the public eye.

They want to promote what they see as "acceptable" women — white, middle class, in crisp red dresses and Kinnockite politics.

More importantly, the leadership accepted quotas as a sop to feminists, while stripping power from the National Labour Women's Organisation.

The Organisation can no longer elect its own National Labour Women's Committee. Instead, the NLWC is being merged with the NEC Women's Committee to produce a new Committee made up of six women elected by the trade unions at National Labour Women's Conference, 11 by Regional Women's Conferences (also dominated by trade unions), plus women members of the NEC.

CLP women will have little hope of a voice.

The Party leadership simply ignored the demands for effective power raised for the past ten years by the Women's Organisation: election of the five women's places on the NEC by women's own Conference and the right for that Conference to put five resolutions directly to Annual Conference.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Labour Women's Conference 1988 was trying out its new structures: by 1989, the structures had been used to further erode women's voices.

In contrast the NEC made it clear that until "the new arrangements for the National Conference of Labour Women are working effectively" (i.e. the left is excluded) there would be no question of women electing their own representatives on the NEC.

So who are the women elected under the new quota system going to represent? Clearly, they will not represent women in the Women's Organisation, which will be a ghost of its former self.

In fact, they will be elected by male delegates at Annual Conference and will therefore be accountable to them, and not to Labour women.

No woman who stands for anything controversial or anything the male leadership doesn't support will be elected.

Women for Socialism support quotas as a form of positive action. We believe, however, that quotas without power will be meaningless.

The only result will be to help Peter Mandelson provide more women for the TV cameras. These women will not have the backing of the grassroots women in the Party and, try as they might, they will only be accountable to the male leadership.

To join Women for Socialism, or for further information, write to:
Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY.

Pro-Choice Video

NAC is distributing a video made in the US by the Feminist Fund for the Majority, called "Abortion: For Survival". Made as the answer to "The Silent Scream" and "The Eclipse of Reason", it is a hard-hitting, moving, and powerful account of how access to safe, legal abortion is important to all women, world-wide. It opens with an abortion which, unlike that featured in the two anti-abortion videos, concentrates on the women and her reactions. The video, which will be shown at the NAC Conference, is available for hire or purchase. Details of the Conference, video, and international journal can all be obtained from NAC, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2B 5AU (01-405 4801).

National Abortion Campaign (NAC) Annual Conference October 28th/29th

For details contact:
NAC, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court,
London WC2B 5AU. Tel. (01)-405 4801.

Pro-choice in Brighton

As usual, Labour Life reared their heads at Brighton, and held a fringe meeting.

Stars of the meeting were to be well known Labour activists Stuart Bell and Lord Longford. Presumably they were going to discuss why they are against a "woman's right to choose".

Labour women held an effective picket of the meeting, reported in the *Briefing* Labour Party Conference Delegates Briefing as follows:

Over 60 comrades picketed "Labour Life". ...

Only a handful of people went through the picket line — the vast majority being men!

"Labour Life" has been allowed to "register" with the Labour Party; while Conference was not allowed to debate the issue on Tuesday morning.

The following crossed the picket line to attend the meeting:

Delegates from Mitcham & Morden, Ealing North, Sheffield Central, MSF Salaried Fraction;
an NUR Visitor;
and a "Keep Sunday Special" exhibitor.

Labour debates child abuse

By Liz Davies

The most radical motion at Conference was completely ignored by the media, possibly because they didn't understand it!

Until recently, the Labour Party has not discussed (or even thought about) child abuse, keeping quiet even when one of its MPs was making a fool of himself in Cleveland.

Now a motion has been passed pinpointing the family and the role of men within it as the source of child abuse.

There was no talk of innocent parents, pursued by wicked doctors and social workers.

Instead, several good speeches from women delegates called for a child-centred approach, removing the abuser not the abused, and taking the child's perspective seriously.

The debate culminated in a rousing speech from a delegate who contrasted this approach with that taken by Stuart Bell. She never actually named him, but the message was clear.

The delegates overwhelmingly supported this analysis of male sexuality (at least they put their hands up for it).

The media were blithely unaware of the subversive implications.

Does this mean Labour no longer stands up for family values? We live in hope.

BOOK REVIEW

The FBI's war on the people

Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement, by Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *South End Press*, 1988.

The authors of this fascinating and well researched book confirm our worst suspicions when they maintain that the FBI's reason for existence has less to do with stopping crime than halting any possible threat to the state.

This was the case in:

•1906 when the Bureau of Intelligence was formed to deal with the International Workers of the World;

•the 1920s when the General Intelligence Division of the Justice Department compiled dossiers on some 60,000 radicals;

•the 1930s when J. Edgar Hoover, without waiting for the consent of Congress, began his notorious investigation of subversion in factories and trade unions;

•the 1940s when the FBI's COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program) was set up to infiltrate and destabilise the Socialist Workers Party and CPUSA;

•1968 when COINTELPRO-New Left was established to combat trade unionists, SDS, the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, the Black Panther Party, the Brown Berets, and the American Indian Movement (AIM).

Using tactics like infiltration, bogus mail, false accusation, media disinformation, lengthy court cases, and pre-trial incarcerations, the FBI has sought to discredit and destroy anything that it considers politically objectionable, even if that means being involved in physical assaults and murder.

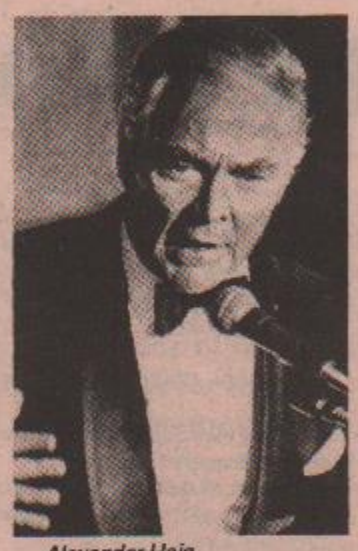
The book details how the FBI engineered the splits in the Black Panthers and were involved in the murder of George Jackson and the framing of Geronimo Pratt.

Activities

From 1972 to 1976, COINTELPRO activities resulted in the deaths of at least 69 AIM supporters and over 300 violent assaults or shootings.

When, in 1972, AIM gathered at Wounded Knee to press for land and treaty rights, Vice Chief of Staff Alexander Haig mounted a full-scale counter-insurgency operation.

It was the first time since the Civil War that the military had been



Alexander Haig

used in a domestic disturbance.

In the wake of the 1,200 arrests at Wounded Knee, the Lakota region would have the highest ratio of agents to citizens in the USA,



How the FBI sees native Americans: as stereotypical Indians?

By Woody Haut
Hampstead & Highgate CLP

and a murder per capita rate equivalent to that in Chile in the three years following Allende's overthrow.

Minerals

Why AIM? Sixty per cent of the nation's minerals are to be found on Indian reservations.

It was the mining of uranium that led to the radioactive pollution of the Cheyenne River and the Pine Ridge watertable and a plethora of miscarriages, cancers, and birth defects.

To add insult to injuries, the area has become a prime site for the dumping of nuclear waste.

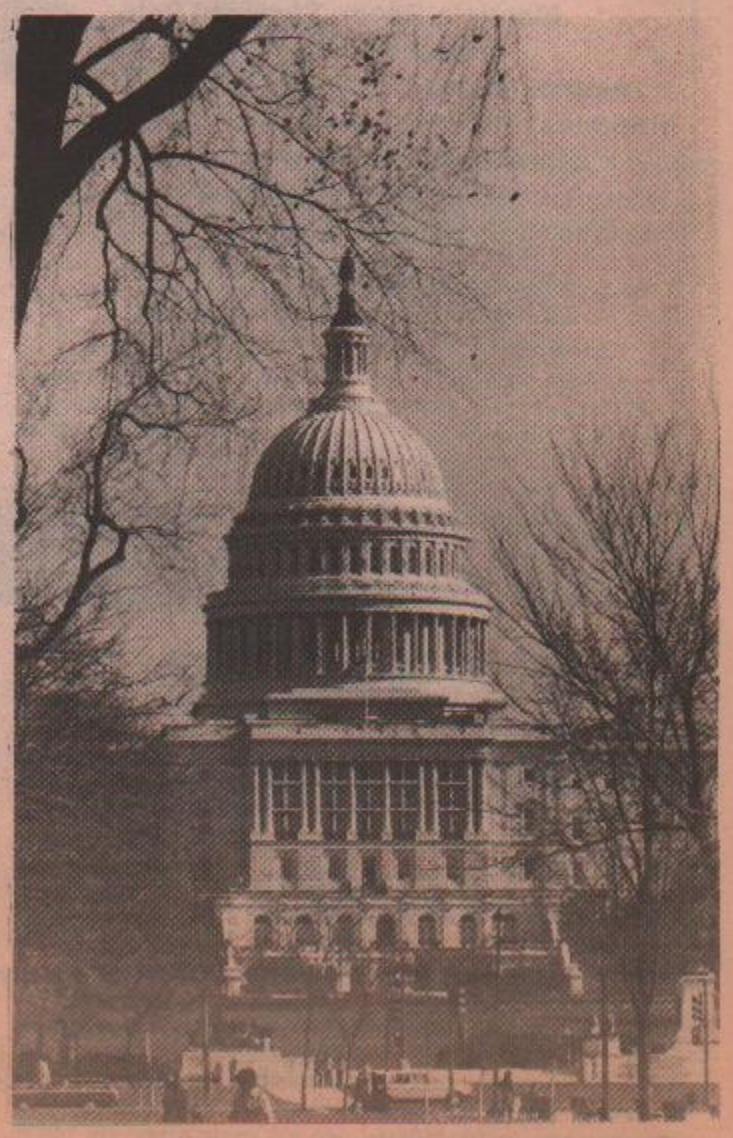
Companies like Hearst's Homestake Mine had, by 1970, excavated some $14 billion in ore from the region, while logging and tourism accounted for as much as $1 billion per year.

By mid 1970 more than 5,000 uranium mining leases had been let by the Interior Department in the Black Hills alone.

The FBI's collaboration with the Guardians of the Oglala Nation (a federal-funded paramilitary force) on Pine Ridge is consistent with its past involvement with the Ku Klux Klan and vigilante groups like the Secret Army Organisation.

These, say the authors, are the American equivalent of the death squads in Brazil and Uruguay.

Though the COINTELPRO was officially terminated in 1971, the Program continues under other names. More recently, the FBI has used COINTELPRO-like tactics against activists in the Committee in Solidarity with the people of El Salvador.



Up on Capitol Hill, Congress lets the FBI run amok attacking those perceived as "subversives".

As the FBI's 1985 action in Puerto Rico showed — when over 300 agents conducted warrantless searches, wrecked homes, impounded property and arrested scores of FALN activists — the FBI continues to behave as if it existed within a Latin American dictatorship.

The authors conclude by urging the left, black, Native American, gay, and women's organisations to form a national council to combat police repression of political activists.

BOOK REVIEW

South Africa's "harmful" art

Culture in another South Africa, eds. W. Campscheur & J. Divendal, *Zed Books*, £9.95 (paperback).

In 1987, a wide range of South African artists gathered at a conference in Amsterdam to celebrate culture in Another South Africa (CASA).

This book is a record of this unusual event with contributions from black writers, poets, musicians, artists, photographers, and filmmakers.

There are 20 pages of recent black political poetry. Other contributions centre on the problems of censorship, with detailed analysis of the web of laws which prevent the publication or performance of "harmful" art.

Some articles tackle the aesthetic problems arising from cultural oppression. It is here that the book most clearly reveals its political limitations.

The important contribution on this question made by adherents of the philosophy of black consciousness is neglected. Instead the vague and undefined notion of a "democratic culture" permeates the Conference resolutions.

By Mike Phipps
Chair, Greenwich & Bexley Anti-Apartheid

This is not surprising. CASA was an initiative closely linked to the African National Congress. Its "democratic programme" forms the context in which these issues are debated.

Indeed, the Freedom Charter and ANC contribution are appended to the Conference proceedings, and all the keynote speeches are by the ANC and representatives of the UDF and COSATU. The ideas of other political tendencies do not feature at all.

This weakness is clearest in relation to the cultural boycott of South Africa. Responding to criticism that some aspects of the cultural boycott have been counterproductive, Braam and Geerlings write:

"A major contribution to this debate was rendered by ANC President Oliver Tambo in a speech in London in May 1987.

"Here he indicated that the ANC had modified its 30-year old commitment to a blanket boycott of all cultural and academic links with South Africa.

"The boycotts would be continued — but the ANC would become selective in its choice of targets."

The authors see no problem in the ANC appointing itself as sole arbiter of what South African culture should be upheld and what should be boycotted.

Other legitimate currents in the liberation struggle would no doubt disagree with the ANC being accorded this monopoly privilege.

These failings apart, *Culture in South Africa* contains much of interest and is a book which seeks to bring the struggle on the cultural front to a wide audience.

BOOK REVIEW

When the State kills...

When the State kills... The death penalty v. human rights, *Amnesty International*, £9.95.

Brazil last did it in 1855, Iceland in 1830, Lichtenstein in 1785, and San Marino in 1468!

The UK last did it in 1964 and the USA is still doing it today.

Amnesty International's comprehensive report makes grim reading, especially the chapter which deals with "The Cruelty of the Death Penalty" — methods, the waiting, the ritual, its effects on others.

The "big seven" when it comes to judicial murder are (in alphabetical order): China, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, South Africa, the USA, and the USSR.

The USA leads the way with "sophisticated" and "humane" methods such as the gas chamber and lethal injections. Precisely because they are based on scientific progress they emphasise the barbarity of the penalty as such.

Iran's rules of procedure insist on the right dimensions for materials used in stoning to death: "Not too large so that the person dies on being hit by one or two of them; not so small that they could not be defined as stones."

By Keith White

Most of the 100 countries retaining the "supreme penalty" prefer hanging or shooting. In Iraq families have been asked to pay for coffins and bullets.

The Report's central thesis is that nothing justifies the removal of the universal human right to life.

It argues the case for abolition, describes the death penalty's current use internationally and charts the steps towards worldwide abolition.

Pictures and quotes from prominent people are well used alongside the text but more could have been made of pictures, helping further to personalise the most intensely personal experience anyone can face — a pointless, powerless, conscious death.

Socialists often feel uncomfortable with campaigns for inalienable rights. Many are killed by states which have all but abolished the death penalty.

El Salvador has executed only twice in the last 30 years, but makes extensive use of deaths squads and the UK government shoots Irish Republicans at will.

So why focus on the specific aim of outlawing judicial killing? Why waste precious time defending those guilty of indefensible crimes?

In reality, the death penalty is the most barbaric act yet devised by "civilised" humankind and we must take an unequivocal stand against it. We should endorse *AI's* campaign and encourage others to do so.

Contact: Amnesty International British Section, 99-119 Rosebury Avenue, London EC1R 4RE, tel. 01-278 6000.

Solidarity Network AGM/Conference

Saturday October 14th

12.30-5pm (Registration from 12)
Mandela Room, Sheffield Poly
(opposite BR station)

Agenda includes: Speakers from recent struggles, including docks, rail, tube, NALGO; balance sheet of last year's work; development of the Network and its Bulletin; Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference; election of officers.

Creche facilities available only if booked one week in advance.

Credentials: £2 waged, £1 unwaged, strikers free.

To register, send your name, address (and organisation if applicable) with a cheque to John Lang, 74 Kingsland Road, Plaistow, London E13, from whom further details and leaflets for the Conference can be obtained.

TILBURY

A message from shop stewards

We are shop stewards sacked from the Port of Tilbury during an official strike.

The strike had even been sanctioned by the House of Lords!

There was a secret ballot of the workforce in which 74% voted in favour of striking. As stewards, in leading this strike we were carrying out the ballot decision.

Our strike took place to obtain a national agreement with terms and conditions for all dockers.

At the TGWU Biennial Delegates Conference, a resolution was passed stating that a labour scheme for the industry be re-established after the election of a Labour government. This resolution must be implemented.

One hundred and forty-eight workers at Tilbury docks were compulsory severed, including 16 shop stewards.

Our cases are presently before an Industrial Tribunal. These tribunals, which are our only redress for being sacked, can be ignored by the employer if the findings go against them. This must be changed by the next Labour government.

Two of the reasons given for our sackings in the Port of Tilbury's defence papers were:

•We took strike action in support of the GCHQ workers who were being denied trade union rights. **We plead guilty.**

•We took strike action in support of the NHS and particularly the nurses. **We plead guilty.**

We were sacked for defending trade unionism not only in the docks but in general. The next Labour government must abolish anti-trade union laws. In no other country in Western Europe can an employer sack someone during an official dispute.

Thatcher's government demands trade union rights in Poland. We demand them in Britain as well.

CPSA

Staffing strike

For the last few months CPSA members at Wolverhampton Unemployment Benefit Offices have been working under increased pressure because of inadequate staffing levels.

This has led to tension between staff and claimants as payments have often been delayed.

Two one-day strikes did not convince Management of the seriousness of the problem. On August 16th, 30 members came out on indefinite strike.

On September 21st CPSA members in the Brownhills UBO and Jobcentre also came out on indefinite strike. The dispute continues despite the fact that the area is *underspent* on their staffing budget.

Although members are receiving some strike pay they are in poorly paid jobs. It is vital therefore that they are not forced back to work by financial hardship. Wolverhampton and Walsall strikers need your support during this dispute.

Please send all messages and donations to PO Box 261, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV10 0QT; telephone 0902-771124.

Wolverhampton & Walsall strikers

Socialist Movement trade union conference

Come and develop a strategy for today!

The Socialist Movement Conference for socialists in the trade unions is an important opportunity to consolidate the left in the unions and begin to organise more effectively against the forces of New Realism.

By Alan Thornett
Trade Union Briefing

It will fill the vacuum left by BLOC and the LCDTU in organising effective trade union initiatives.

It will also be in many ways unique. It is broader based than comparable previous initiatives and breaks out of their relatively narrow focus.

Issues previously marginalised at such conferences are right up front: women in the unions, black workers and the unions, and lesbian and gay men and the unions are right up front.

Ecology as a trade union issue is given a major focus and campaigns such as the defence of the NHS and the struggle against the Poll Tax will have prominent positions.

Three central themes will run through the weekend:

•opposition to New Realism in all its forms at every level of the trade union movement;

•solidarity with all those taking action against the employers or the government;

•trade union democracy to ensure the rights and active involvement of rank and file trade union members — women and men, black and white — are ensured at every level of the unions.

Keynote platform speakers include:

•Betty Heathfield, Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill (invited);

•Sean Redman (General Secretary of the Irish Municipal Workers Union);

•Debbie Epstein (from the STA speaking as an out lesbian woman);

•Kim Moody (from Labour Notes USA);

•a speaker from NALGO black workers group and speakers from the docks, rail and engineering (if the struggle is on for the 35 hour week).

The key part of the conference will be discussion on an understanding of the many problems facing the unions and how we create the kind of current which can start seriously to tackle them.

It should be a conference which produces practical results not simply propaganda for what is ideal — although it should do that as well.

A unique feature of the conference will be its democratic and decision-making character. No previous trade union initiative has attempted this.

Active trade unionists are being asked not simply to come and listen to speeches and then go home feeling better, but to participate in formulating and implementing a strategy for socialist in the unions in today's conditions.

To this end the conference will discuss a lengthy statement on the situation in the unions. This will be open to amendments from the workshops at the conference.

A resolution will be put calling for the work of the Socialist Movement to be greatly strengthened in the unions, for a Socialist Movement trade union steering committee and for local trade union working groups where there is a Socialist Movement regional structure.



PHOTO: Andrea Campbell

Organising to support the Hangers' dispute

BOOK REVIEW

Labour's vital link

***Natural Allies: Labour and the Unions*, by Martin Upham and Tom Wilson, *Fabian Tract*, £2.**

Upham and Wilson have produced a useful pamphlet that argues that Labour's links with the unions should be a source of strength.

It argues against the more fashionable Kinnockite notion of an individualist and consumer-orientated Party as opposed to the collectivist identity associated with trade unionism.

By BEN JONES

It explicitly rejects the LCC idea that the new "mass membership" scheme is an alternative to the block vote which can be phased out as individual balloting neutralises the CLP left.

In defending the block vote the pamphlet does not simply defend the trade union link but also looks at how that link can be democratised.

Upham and Wilson point out that the "original Labour Representation Committee was founded on the model of small, roughly equal-sized unions." This changed rather quickly with amalgamations reducing the total number of affiliations.

Today the situation is extreme with four unions able to command a majority at Conference.

In response to the growing centralisation of power in large unions the authors argue that trade unions should be asked to split their block votes to reflect the opinions of their members.

In principle the left should support such a proposal. In the Benn-Heffer leadership challenge a significant minority across a number of unions failed to gain representation at Conference itself.

To defend the block vote in its existing form is to defend an increasingly monolithic system. The difficulty is how exactly the dissaggregation of the block vote should be brought about.

Balloting of individual members would undermine collective decision-making structures. Union conferences would be the best place to divide votes following collective debate and clear statement of all alternatives.

The Construction Safety Campaign

is organising a

National Lobby of Parliament

to demand better laws on health and safety in the construction industry, and to demand that the law is enforced on sites.

Thursday October 19th, 3-6pm

Assemble St Stephens Gate, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1

3.30pm: Meeting with MPs in the Grand Central Committee Room

4.30-6pm: Ask your MP to come and meet you to discuss Health and Safety in the Construction Industry. Write to them now, telling them you want to see them on October 19th, and why. If they can't see you then, ask for an appointment in their Constituency instead.

In the last ten years there have been over 1,500 building workers killed in site accidents and injuries must run into millions. Bronchitis, cancer and other diseases of dust, and lousy working conditions kill around 4,000 building workers every year.

Building employers kill workers through negligence and greed — there were 160 deaths last year alone. Yet fines on employers are a measly few hundred pounds and no employer has ever been imprisoned for causing the death of a worker.

This deadly trend in the construction industry is growing worse. Help us put an end to this unnecessary suffering. Join the Lobby of Parliament.

Support the Construction Safety Campaign.

NUJ

Aberdeen

Journalists strike for trade union rights

By Aberdeen Journals Chapel

Aberdeen journalists are on strike again — just three weeks after finishing a 19-day strike over union recognition.

The reason is a bullying management which has victimised members of the National Union of Journalists since their return-to-work deal.

Aberdeen Journals, publishers of *The Press & Journal* and *Evening Express*, have acted in bad faith to their employees since the strike ended.

Eight journalists have left the publications in the last five weeks. Fifty NUJ members have left Aberdeen Journals in the last two years. They have left because of the company's union-bashing and poor staff relations.

Since the first dispute — which attracted a massive public boycott of the papers — trade unionists have been victimised. The company has refused to meet ACAS, and has even attempted to dictate who represents the NUJ in negotiations.

Despite sacking threats, the strike has remained solid.

Messages of support should be sent to Iain Campbell, NUJ, Summerhill Lodge Hotel, Mastrick, Aberdeen.

Essex Chronicle

Sacked for striking!

By Jeremy Dear FoC Essex Chronicle Series Chapel

Fourteen NUJ members have been sacked for striking by the Essex Chronicle Series of weekly newspapers.

The Series is owned by Northcliffe Newspapers and ultimately by the Daily Mail and General Trust.

The four month old dispute is over the basic right to union recognition and a living wage.

This year's TUC Conference saw delegates representing nine and a half million trade unionists voting unanimously to back the right to union recognition.

Journalists walked out on official strike on June 26th following the continual refusal of management to recognise the right of elected officers to represent their members.

Since then we have picketted the paper's Chelmsford head quarters and Brentwood office. After over three months we are more determined than ever to defeat the company's union-bashing tactics.

Huge personal sacrifices have been made by the strikers but we have been repaid by the tremendous solidarity shown by fellow trade unionists and Labour Party branches all over the country.

A half-day stoppage was held by NUJ chapels throughout the Northcliffe group and a massive local boycott campaign has been mounted against the *Chronicle*.

But we need to put more pressure on Northcliffe management to secure reinstatement and full union recognition. We ask all to help in the following ways:

•Send messages of support and donations to the strikers (cheques to Chronicle NUJ) at Essex Chronicle Series Chapel, c/o 163a High Street, Brentwood, Essex. 0277-230324.

•Send letters of protest to Managing Director Harry Levy at *Essex Chronicle Series*, Westway, Chelmsford, Essex.

•Invite an NUJ striker to speak at Labour Party branch meetings.

•If your Constituency covers any of the following papers, write to their managing directors, urging them to raise the issue with Northcliffe and insist on reinstatement and union recognition:

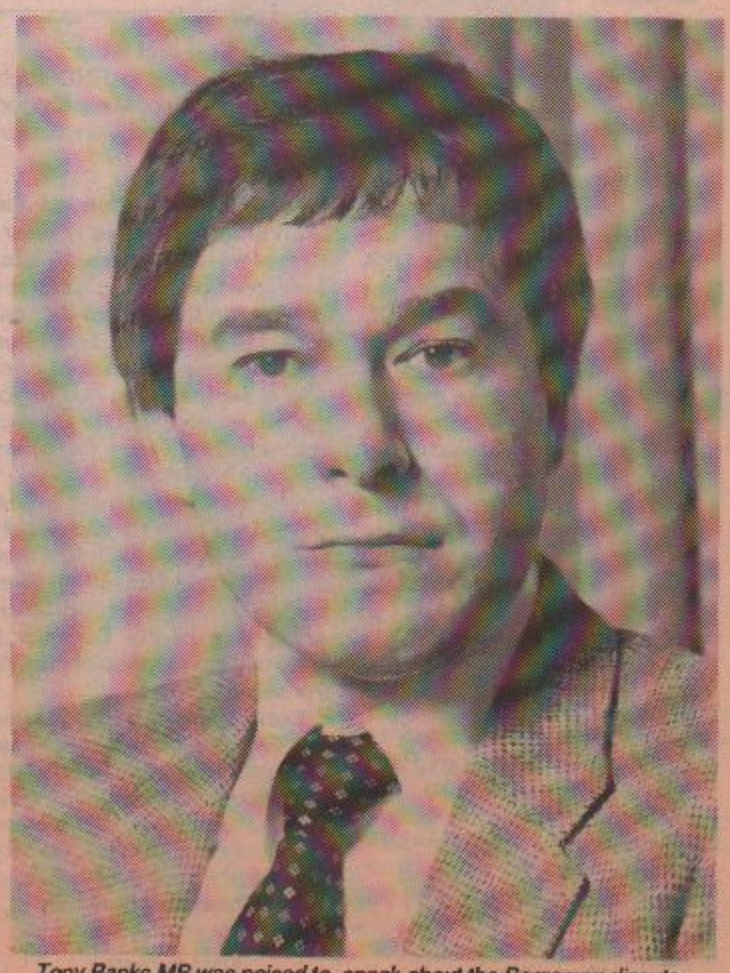
Derby Evening Telegraph, Exeter Express and Echo, Gloucester Citizen, Journal and Echo, Grimsby Evening Telegraph, Hull Daily Mail, Kent and Sussex Courier, Lincolnshire Echo, Leicester Mercury, South Wales Evening Post, Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph, Stoke Evening Sentinel, Plymouth Western Morning News and Herald.

HANDS OFF OUR NHS!
TEAR UP THE WHITE PAPER!
Saturday October 1st
March from St Thomas's Hospital, Assemble 4pm, Belvedere Road, London SE1
Rally, 6pm, Camden Centre
Cabaret: 7.30pm, "Rip It Up!" by Popular Productions (Sheffield)

Pergamon

Winning support from the Labour Party

One of the most positive aspects of a depressing Labour Party Conference was the support built during the week for the Pergamon dispute. TERRY CONWAY from *Labour Briefing* spoke to a group of the sacked workers who were in Brighton for the week about the success of their camapign for support and their future plans.



Tony Banks MP was poised to speak about the Pergamon dispute

Would you like to tell us how the lobbying has gone this week and what you think you have achieved?

I think its been really successful. We've considerably raised the level of debate about the Pergamon dispute as well as extending the support to CLPs who hadn't previously heard of us.

At the opening of Conference, you were trying to get an amendment about the dispute onto the agenda, but you weren't successful. Why do you think that was? Would it have made any difference if it had come up later in the week?

I don't think so. We were basically told the amendment was out of order, which is what Standing Orders had said in the first place. We know that the NGA and SOGAT voted against us, while NUR, NUM, FBU and MSF voted for.

The high point of your week (and indeed probably of the whole week) must have been the 300-strong lobby of Maxwell's reception on Wednesday night. Were you pleased with that?

It was considerably more successful than we ever could have expected. That was because we leafletted Conference that day and that Maxwell himself had appeared during the afternoon so that people did belive that he was there.

The fact that this issue was raised on Conference floor by an NUM delegate from Chesterfield was very useful, as was the intervention of Brenda Dean who questioned the compatability of Maxwell's actions as an employer with his Party membership.

She also explained that over 100 NGA and SOGAT members at Maxwell's Nuffield Press have had their unions de-recognised. Do you know what is happening about that?

It may well be the case that the workers there have agreed to sign new contracts because they have had very little back up either from the NGA or SOGAT.

If Brenda Dean's intervention in Conference means that she is committed to a fight over that issue then that is very positive and we would be very much in favour of a joint campaign between Nuffield and Pergamon.

What are your plans for the future?

We're going to be thinking of ways in which we can maintain the momentum we have gained this week on the Labour Party side.

It was unfortunate that Tony Banks wasn't able to speak to Conference on our behalf, as he would have done a very good job. We must make it clear to the NEC that it is going to be a continual embarrasment to them not to intervene and get Maxwell to settle.

We are also planning to take the dispute to the European Parliament. We think it is possible to get further commitements from other trade unions through which it should be possible to starve Maxwell out.

Maxwell is not going to want to face a sustained attack from the top levels of the labour movement: so that is what we intend to give him!

Ambulance dispute

Escalate the action!

Action by ambulance staff has escalated as Control Officers and Assistants joined the overtime ban from midnight on October 4th. The derisory offer of 6.5% is regarded as totally inadequate to reverse a long-term decline in morale. The average pay of £10,000 is £2,000 behind comparable staff in other emergency services like the Fire Brigade. The unions are demanding 11% as the basis of a fair settlement.
KATHERINE MUNBY, Branch Secretary of Oxfordshire NUPE Ambulance Branch, spoke to Briefing about the progress of the dispute.

***LB:* Tell us about the current stage of the industrial action.**

KM: Strong, absolutely 100% solid. If anything, members are getting more and more worked up and are asking for an increase in industrial action.

It's also becoming clear that the issues go beyond pay and involve the whole future of the Service. The Tories hold up as a model service ones like Northumbria, where parts of the outpatient service have been privatised, leading to the sick and elderly having to climb into minibuses because there is in effect no proper ambulance service.

It's not just about paramedics. We need to promote all the workers who provide day-to-day care for the community.

***LB:* Have the employers moved?**

KM: There have been some talks but no progress is apparent. We are determined to hold out for binding arbitration.

***LB:* What about the union leaderships?**

KM: The leadership position is that the overtime ban is effective, but we mustn't risk losing public support.

In reality I would say it's a matter of time until someone dies as a result of the diminution of service. Then all the media will turn on us.

We would be better to have the courage of our convictions and escalate the action now — by calling 24-hour all-out strike action, for example.

***LB:* What support is needed from the labour movement?**

KM: THe issue needs to be raised in union branches. Messages of support should be sent, letters to MPs, etc.

The important thing is to bring home to people how undervalued and under-resourced the ambulance service really is and how vital it is that we halt the decline now.

International Briefing

European Nuclear Disarmament

Stalinists strangle Gasteiz

The eighth Convention of European Nuclear Disarmament marked a major turning point for END in Europe.

It was held in Gasteiz, seat of the parliament of the "Basque Autonomous Community".

It marked a major victory for the Stalinists in the European peace movement, who have always seen END as a group of cheerleaders for detente between the USSR and the USA rather than an independent mass movement.

The decline in the mass peace movement since the early 80s and the idea that the INF agreement and Gorbachev mean an end to the threat of war in Europe have set back those, including the founders of END in Britain, who believe in a peace movement built across East and West.

Preparatory

The Convention Preparatory Committee was dominated by the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) who provided the Secretary and the EE (a split away from the Basque nationalist struggle in the direction of Stalinism) who held the Chair.

The Preparatory Committee was based in Madrid and took all the real decisions, frequently against the wishes of the Basque Support Committee.

With the backing of those on the END Liaison Committee with similar politics, notably Ken Coates and Ken Fleet of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, the Convention was turned into a jamboree for of-

By Matthew Jones Coventry Labour Briefing

ficialdom East and West.

Central figures in END such as EP Thompson, Mary Kaldor, Lynne Jones, and Jan Kavan did not take part.

Fewer people attended the Convention than last year. There were fewer activists, more paid officials, a dramatic increase in the size of delegations from the East European state "peace" organisations, plus a decline in the number of invitations and people present from unofficial East European peace movements.

Sessions varied from a few good ones to the turgid (hardly surprising, given the infestation of Stalinists). More than ever before the most useful and interesting part of the Convention was talking to people outside the session.

During the opening session the EKI (the Anti-Nuclear and Ecological Committees of Euskadi) hung a banner in the main Convention hall behind the stage asking in three languages: "Peace Movement or Peace Business?"

Initiatives

Some interesting initiatives are being taken in the peace movement across Europe.

•In Switzerland there is a campaign for a referendum on abolishing the Swiss Army altogether and embarking on a global peace policy.

•Charter 77 is calling for a European Citizens' Assembly in 1990 in either Prague or Budapest. This could be important in bringing together people from capitalist and Stalinist state systems to attempt to solve common problems.

The final session of the Convention was incredible.

It was addressed by Ardanza, President of the "Basque Autonomous Community" Parliament, a supporter of NATO and in favour of the military court action against conscientious objectors.

Currently some 500 conscientious objectors including 200 or so Basques are facing two to six years in jail for refusing to serve.

There was a very angry demonstration against Ardanza, highlighting the oppression of Basque Nationalists and the COs, the number driven into exile, jailed, tortured, and killed, and the link between the Spanish state forces and death squads.

The Convention building was ringed by armed police and the main hall full of armed plainclothes police protecting a warmonger in a peace convention!

The organised left in Europe has a responsibility for the degeneration of the END Conventions.

With the exception of the Third Convention in Perugia, it has had no major presence or impact, in effect allowing the Stalinists and their hangers-on to use END and discredit a major peace movement initiative containing within it some extremely positive and creative strands.

EUROPE

Namibian Elections

Climate of fear as elections approach

The last few weeks have been a watershed in the independence process for Namibia leading up to the elections in early November.

Political parties contesting the election have made their applications for registration. The voter registration period has ended, amid calls from SWAPO for an extension.

The entire exiled SWAPO leadership have returned to the country. But these events have been overshadowed by the assasination of Anton Lubowski, a senior SWAPO official and former Treasurer of the National Union of Namibian Workers.

The cold-blooded murder of Lubowski after a number of threats on his life raises the question of the intimidation of SWAPO and its supporters which has been a constant feature of the independence process.

By David Clark Namibia Support Committee

Almost every organisation to have visited Namibia to monitor the election process has raised this issue.

Since Lubowski's murder on September 12th there have been three shooting incidents in Windhoek alone. Twice gunshots were fired at the SWAPO office and a film crew were also shot at. Fortunately no-one was injured in these incidents.

More sinister was an attempt by the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (South Africa's preferred party) to organise a march on Sam Nujoma's home in Katutura on September 20th.

The march was turned back by UNTAG but the crowd then went on the rampage through the township breaking windows and stoning houses showing SWAPO flags and colours.

UNTAG has attempted to defuse inter-party violence and intimidation by persuading nine of the parties jointly to sign a code of conduct providing for members and supporters voluntarily to refrain from carrying weapons and disrupting meetings.

The main political intimidater is not the parties but *Koevoet*, the paramilitary hunter-killer squads trained by South Africa to kill SWAPO guerillas during the war.

In an effort to defuse international pressure, South Africa's colonial governor in Namibia announced that 1,200 Koevoet members were to be "confined to bases", although it has since been discovered that this is only between the hours of nine to five.

Koevoet, once again wearing their old uniforms and still carrying weapons, continue to patrol after dark in their much-feared casspirs as they have since their formation during the war.

We must continue to demand the disbandment of Koevoet and the South West African Territorial Force. Both could cause serious problems during the elections and the transitional period.

Sri Lanka

The killing fields

In the last two months there has been a huge escalation of political violence in Sri Lanka with estimates of up to 500 politically motivated murders each week.

They are being committed not in the traditional Tamil areas in the North and East but in the predominantly Sinhala speaking South.

Up and down the country charred and disfigured dead bodies, mostly of young men, are found dumped in rivers almost every day.

A majority of these brutal murders are being committed by members of the security forces or death squads organised by the ruling United National Party (UNP).

Often the army and more often the dreaded Special Task Force (STF) comb through whole districts and indiscriminately arrest all males between the ages of 15 and 30. Some of them are released, some are detained, and others disappear.

In order to prevent parents and relatives identifying the dead, these killer gangs disfigure or burn the faces of their victims.

By GAMUNU KUMARU

Draconian laws enable members of the security forces to arrest and hold incommunicado any person, without trial, for a period of 18 months. Thereafter detainees may be released or immediately re-arrested and detained for a further 18 months.

The security forces have also murdered a number of lawyers who had the courage to initiate legal action against the authorities. Even a conservative body such as the Bar Council is considered by the security forces as a subversive organisation.

The latest campaign of terror by the security forces is the government's answer to the JVP's (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) assassination of its political opponents.

Although they have mostly killed members of the ruling UNP and security forces the JVP has not hesitated to eliminate members of left parties and trade unions.

The JVP has also demanded members of the army and police resign from their posts or face reprisals against their families.

This ultimatum seems to have been a godsend for the government, enabling the government to rally all the security forces behind their campaign of repression.

The army have put up posters threatening to kill 12 JVP members or supporters for every member of the security forces killed by the JVP.

In the central highlands last month the JVP went on the rampage after killing some members of a soldier's family. They killed over 150 people, including old men, women, and children. This is one of many such massacres.

The police and army are often unable to distinguish between JVP members and other opposition political parties.

Employers too have used this situation to get rid of militant workers who are often falsely denounced to the police as JVP members. Many such workers have been arrested and their whereabouts are not known.

The JVP method of "workers' actions" (armed JVP members compelling workers to go on strike) initially seemed to force the government to retreat.

But elements within the security forces are ready to push aside political leaders and take matters into their own hands.

With no organisation among the rural or urban masses the JVP will not be able to confront the security forces and UNP paramilitary groups.

In recent weeks JVP spokespersons have complained there is no effort by any mass organisations to oppose the actions of the death squads.

But this is not surprising. Once JVP upped the stakes and decided to take the armed forces head on it left very little room for even human rights organisations to function. Most political or trade union organisations are unable even to call a meeting.

In these difficult conditions revolutionary socialists are compelled to organise clandestinely, campaigning for democratic rights, an end to death squads and the restoration of democratic liberties.



PHOTO: John Liebenberg/NCCT

Koevoet terror squads now patrolling the streets.

Interview: Moses Mayekiso

Solidarity with South African workers

MOSES MAYEKISO, General Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), recently visited Britain. For three years he was imprisoned during the trial of the Alexandra 5. After his aquittal Moses was invited to Britain as a guest of honour at this year's Trade Union Congress.

NUMSA organises the strikers in South Africa's longest-ever industrial dispute at the BTR-Samcol factory near Howick, Natal. Moses spoke to CELIA DIGNAM of the BTR Workers Support Group about his trial, the strike and the present situation in South Africa.



Moses Mayekiso [left].

***LB*: Could you explain how the trial came about and the factors leading to your aquittal?**

MM: I would like to thank the British friends and trade unionists who led the campaign which got us released. We believe we won because of the international campaign and the pressure from inside the country.

We were charged with high treason, subversion and sedition. These charges related to our efforts to organise people into street committees, yard committees and block committees in the township.

We copied our organising principles from the trade unions. We believed the time had come to base civic organisations on democratic structures, where people can make decisions for themselves, rather than leaders making decisions for them.

Our aim was that the leadership would be sent with mandates from the community itself and that they would be accountable to the people through reportbacks and recalls.

Our structures were a success. People became involved in rent, consumer and white shop boycotts.

We also isolated the police because of their backing for vigilante-type operations and such actions as the "6-day war" where they killed many people.

People also refused to pay rent. Alex is a dirty old township with shacks instead of houses. The money from rents was not being used to improve the town, but to pay the Town Council police who were killing and injuring people.

Throughout the trial we maintained that the only way that people without a vote could make their voices heard was through this type of boycott activity and through their own organisations. It was not treason to organise ourselves.

Right from the beginning the judge showed he was aware of the international focus on the trial — when he said that the high treason charges would not result in execution. He also told the press to report the trial properly as the eyes of the world were on us.

However this did not stop us from being refused bail, imprisoned for three years and put into solitary confinement for seven months.

We knew that they had no case but the state was very unhappy with the aquittal. The result helped the struggle because it proved that building democratic structures in the townships was not a crime.

It was also a test case, because the government wanted to try many other people for the same thing.

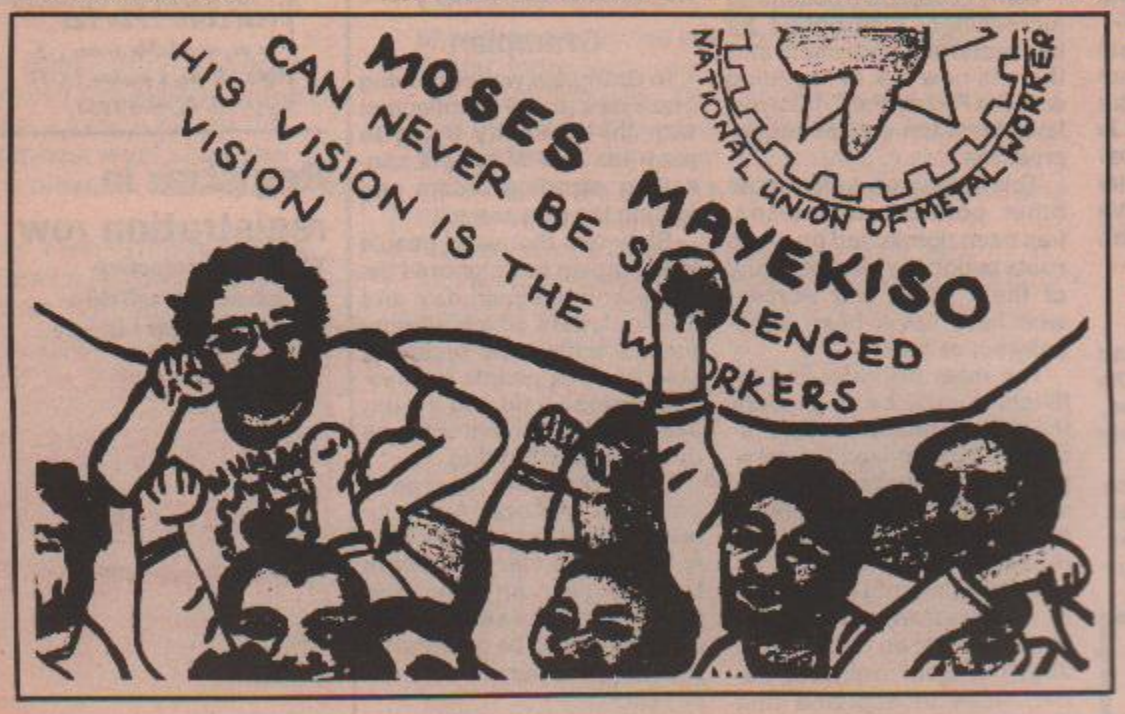
***LB*: When you were in prison you were elected general secretary of NUMSA. To what do you attribute the growth and significance of the union?**

MM: NUMSA is now the largest union in South Africa with 220,000 members. The miners' union, the NUM, is the second largest with 212,000. When the union was inaugurated in 1987 we had 130,000 members, so we have had growth of between 60-70%.

I think this is largely due to the fact that we were involved in fighting the problems of the workers in and out of the factory and we were involved politically.

Today our organisers don't have to go to the workplace to recruit. Workers come into our offices to join.

But growth has brought us problems, like the training of shop stewards. It's difficult for workers who lack training to be just thrown into trade union office.



***LB*: Can you tell us about the BTR-Samcol dispute? How is it that after four and a half years these workers are still struggling and have managed to win such wide support?**

MM: BTR-Samcol was one of the first factories we organised as MAWU and one of the first firms we approached for recognition in the 70s. And still workers are fighting for union recognition.

In 1985 the struggle for recognition and for negotiations resulted in a strike. Since then the workers have suffered a lot. But because of the support of metalworkers in South Africa and international solidarity they have managed to survive.

***LB*: One of the main ways the BTR workers have gained support has been through cultural events. What impact have these had in South Africa?**

MM: The BTR workers have taught both NUMSA and COSATU that workers have to promote their own cultural activity.

Today we have a cultural desk in COSATU which was encouraged by the success of plays organised about the BTR strike like the "Long March" and the "Sisters of the Long March".

Even if the BTR dispute ends there will be a NUMSA and COSATU cultural section where workers advance their own cultural aspirations.

***LB*: What is the present position with the dispute? Is there any likelihood of success?**

MM: The situation is very negative. We won the case in the Supreme Court. The judge said that the matter had not been dealt with properly in the Industrial Court.

Now the company is trying to appeal against the decision. We are trying to settle the matter but they are still resistant.

***LB*: BTR is a British multinational company. What do you think are the most important things to be done here?**

MM: The pressure should be maintained. We would encourage all efforts here to pressure the company and to support the workers financially, particularly by supporting their projects.

***LB*: Can you tell us about the role of the trade unions in the mass mobilisations during and since the apartheid general election?**

MM: COSATU played a leading role in deciding what kind of mobilisations were needed. We wanted the world to know that apartheid is still very much alive. We wanted to show that De Klerk is the same as Botha.

So we met with the Mass Democratic Movement and there was a common understanding of the need to campaign against the elections and the Labour Relations Act.

We decided on sustained actions which wouldn't end with the elections but would continue afterwards.

***LB*: How do you see the Mass Democratic Movement developing in the period ahead?**

MM: The MDM was formed by organisations that agree we have to get rid of apartheid to usher in a democratic, non-racial society.

It is a loose organisation. There is no constitution or structure. COSATU is playing a leading role with the United Democratic Movement in shaping the movement.

De Klerk is trying to show the world that he has a new approach to negotiations and the South African crisis. We believe the regime is in trouble because of sanctions, especially financial sanctions.

We have seen the results of the defiance campaign. There were peaceful protests, but the regime responded by killing 29 people, sjamboking and tear-gassing people, using violence to maintain power.

Now De Klerk is allowing some demonstrations. He says that next year there will be negotiations. He is doing this to try and win people to his side. We warn the world not to be fooled.

De Klerk is still entrenched in the Group rights approach, which excludes one person one vote. And anything less than that is not a remedy.

If De Klerk was serious about negotiations he would lift the state of emergency; release the political prisoners; unban the banned organisations and allow the exiles to come back home; remove the army from the townships and withdraw them to barracks.

There would be freedom of association and speech, and people would have the right to express themselves politically.

Until they do all this we cannot believe that they wish to negotiate seriously.

***LB*: So what should the international labour movement be doing to help the struggle?**

MM: Our demand is for one person one vote. Nothing less will satisfy us. The international community should support us. We don't want initiatives of De Klerk around Group Rights or the various proposals of Thatcher and Bush.

We want the initiatives to come from the South African people as the recently adopted document of the Organisation of African Unity makes clear. This contains our minimum demands. We believe that people should support that document.

The British people should put pressure on Thatcher to support that document and support sanctions.

Finally we appeal for direct solidarity with all the struggles going on in South Africa today.

New South African publication

Workers' Revolution

This new, up-to-the-minute journal of revolutionary Marxism, while written to intervene in the debates and initiatives in South Africa, provides an invaluable source of information and ideas for British activists.

The first issue leads with an in-depth assessment of the struggles of the last five years, and goes on to map out the tasks of revolutionary socialists in South Africa today.

Particularly valuable is the section on the "Economic Crisis", which takes the reader through the less well known detail behind the better known generalities.

Other articles expand on the struggles in Namibia, the Soviet Union, and China.

Setting its analysis and demands unashamedly in a Trotskyist context, Workers' Revolution appeals for contributions from readers, so that it can act as a platform for discussion of the burning issues of the day.

Copies of *Workers Revolution* can be ordered from the Labour Briefing office, PO Box 1235, London N4 2UY.

Send cheques (payable to *Labour Briefing*) with your order: £2.35 for 1 copy; £11.50 for 5 copies; £22.70 for 10 copies (including postage and packing).

Demonstration: In Defence of Iranian Political Refugees
Saturday, October 28th, 2pm
Hyde Park Corner, London
Organised by CARI/Iranian Community Centre
Solidarity messages welcome:
BM Box CARI, London WC1N 3XX

LABOUR BRIEFING

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Poll Tax in Scotland

Non-payers stand firm

The non-payment figures published by the Regional Councils of Scotland prove there is a mass campaign of resistance to the Poll Tax.

Well over 700,000 people (out of a total of three and a half million eligible to pay) have not paid a penny; in addition are those who have made token payments, e.g. £5, or one month's payment.

By Sheila Maher
Aberdeen Against the Poll Tax



The Movement mobilises to keep the Sherriffs away in Aberdeen.

Who can take the credit for the greatest defiance of the law Scotland has ever seen? The Labour Party nationally certainly can't.

Individual MPs, Councillors, and activists are playing an active and important part in Anti-Poll Tax groups, but the bureaucracy has deliberately ditched any commitment to protect the people it was elected to represent.

Most Local Authorities in Scotland are Labour-controlled. They have agreed to collect the Poll Tax, as have those controlled by the SNP, Liberals, and coalitions like Grampian.

The Labour Party leadership accuse Anti-Poll Tax groups of attacking Labour-controlled Authorities instead of the Tories. But there is no caring way to administer the Poll Tax.

By agreeing to collect the Poll Tax, Councillors agree to wage arrestments, freezing of bank accounts, and warrant sales.

They also agree to harassment and intimidation by Sheriff Officers of those who can't afford to pay. We have seen plenty of examples of this in Aberdeen over non-registration.

Implementing the Poll Tax, along with competitive tendering, will mean Labour-controlled Local Authorities overseeing the wholesale destruction of Local Authority services.

The official trade union movement can take little credit for the non-payment campaign. Although the STUC have organised successful demonstrations in Scotland, they are not prepared to make a real stand against the Tories.

Campbell Christie, General Secretary of the STUC, is not paying his Poll Tax. Good. But the trade union movement is about more than individual gestures. The history of the movement is one of collective action, so why ditch it on an issue like this?

Leadership

The campaign in Scotland should have been led by the Labour leadership. Instead, they have dropped the people they were elected to serve.

Yet there is still a mass campaign. Anti-Poll Tax groups can certainly take credit for the organised campaigns but figures show non-payment is growing, even where no Anti-Poll Tax groups exist.

Last November, the Scottish Federation of Anti-Poll Tax groups was set up to co-ordinate action throughout Scotland. Unfortunately, because of *Militant* domination, it has not been as effective as it could have been.

Many groups are becoming increasingly disgruntled by its sectarian approach and there is now talk of "splitting with the Federation". Informal links between groups are increasing.

This campaign, unlike most other political campaigns, has been dominated by grass roots action; by people, many of them youth and women, who have never been politically active before.

The main priorities for activists should be to provide the skills, contacts, and political direction to lead the campaign to a successful conclusion. Placing the interests of a political group above this is sectarian.

As we approach the National Federation meeting in Manchester on November 25th it's clear from our experiences in Scotland that domination by any sectarian group will adversely affect the campaign.

Within Aberdeen Against the Poll Tax we have had remarkable success, using tactics frowned on by the Federation.

For example, Committees of 100 are useful tools in heightening awareness and gaining much needed publicity. The Scottish Federation denounces these Committees as elitist.

The next few months are crucial to the campaign. We are six months into non-payment and are still supporting those who haven't registered. Registration is a yearly event.

Grampian

In Grampian we are moving into a new phase in collection with the Authority trying to stem the tide of people cancelling standing orders and joining the non-payers.

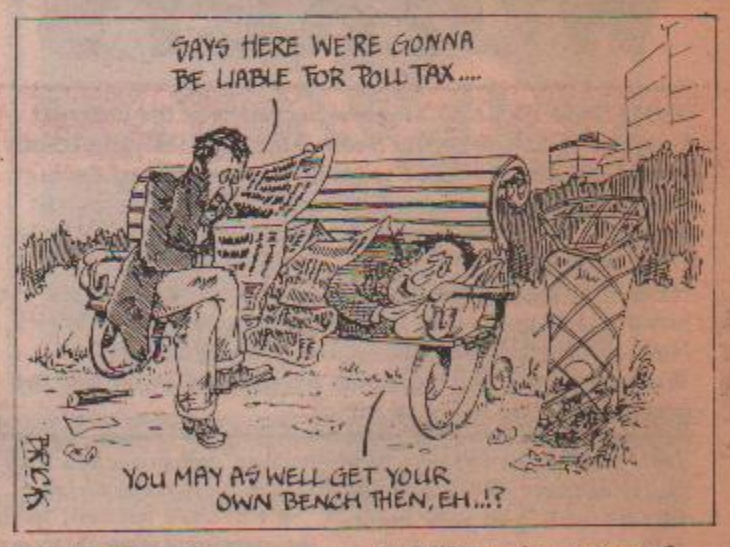
Sixty-two thousand people in Grampian have ignored the threatening seven-day and 14-day letters which all non-payers have now received. One in three people in Glasgow haven't paid. Yet it's unlikely the system will collapse due to lack of funding.

The Community Charge is only 20% of Local Authority revenue and they will probably be able to carry the debts for this year anyway. The political pressure on Authorities will be greatest as they begin to pursue the non-payers.

A successful anti-Poll Tax campaign must unite the campaigns in Scotland and England. Let's make the meeting in Manchester on November 25th the next step in winning this fight and finally sinking the Tories.

National Conference Against the Poll Tax November 25th Manchester

Poll Tax Notes



Tax Facts

According to a book published jointly by the LGIU and CPAG:

•Under the Poll Tax, overall 63% of families lose and 37% gain. The greatest average loss per week is £1.72, while the richest families gain £3.65 per week.

•The analysis of the 1988 Social Security and tax changes shows that 59% of the poorest families lose and only 26% gain. They experience an average loss of £1.82 per week. Of the richest 10%, all gain an average of £16.92 a week.

The combined effects of the 1988 benefit and tax changes and the Poll Tax highlight the regressive nature of the Tory offensive.

Overall 62% lose and 38% gain. One fifth lose £5 a week or more. The poorest 10% lose an average of £2.86 a week; the richest 10% gain £20.57 a week. 70% of tenants lose, compared to 42% of owner occupiers.

From LGIU's Poll Tax Focus, available from 1-5 Bath Street, London EC1V 9QQ, tel. 01-608 1051.

Registrar in registration row

The Data Protection Registrar has upheld a complaint from Liberty (NCCL) on the content of Trafford Borough Council's Poll Tax registration form.

The form asked people to state the nature of their relationship with other people in their household. The Registrar's Office refused Trafford's application to register under the Data Protection Act.

Before being able to place personal data on computer, all Community Charge Registration Officers must register with the Data Protection Registrar under the terms of the Act.

Evidence has also now emerged of other forms asking non-statutory questions. Examples include people being asked to:

• promise to report all changes or movements for everyone in their household at all and any times in the future — *Chelmsford* and *Epsom and Ewell.*

• list their home and daytime telephone numbers — *Epsom and Ewell* and *Winchester.*

• explain their relationship with other people in their household — *Solihull.*

• say where they have been living during the past 12 months if not resident at their present address — *Richmond.*

None of these requests have any legal basis but CCRO's, desperate to cope with the problems created by the Poll Tax, keep asking them.

Birmingham Trades Union Council

Mass demonstration against the Poll Tax

Saturday October 28th

Assemble 12 noon Chamberlain Square
Rally at 1.00pm
Speakers:
Jeff Rooker MP; Christine Crawley MEP; Dave Nellist MP; Sid Platt; Avtar Jouhl
Followed by:
anti-Poll Tax Festival

Bring your banners!